

# Laughter on the Hill

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*A San Francisco Interlude*

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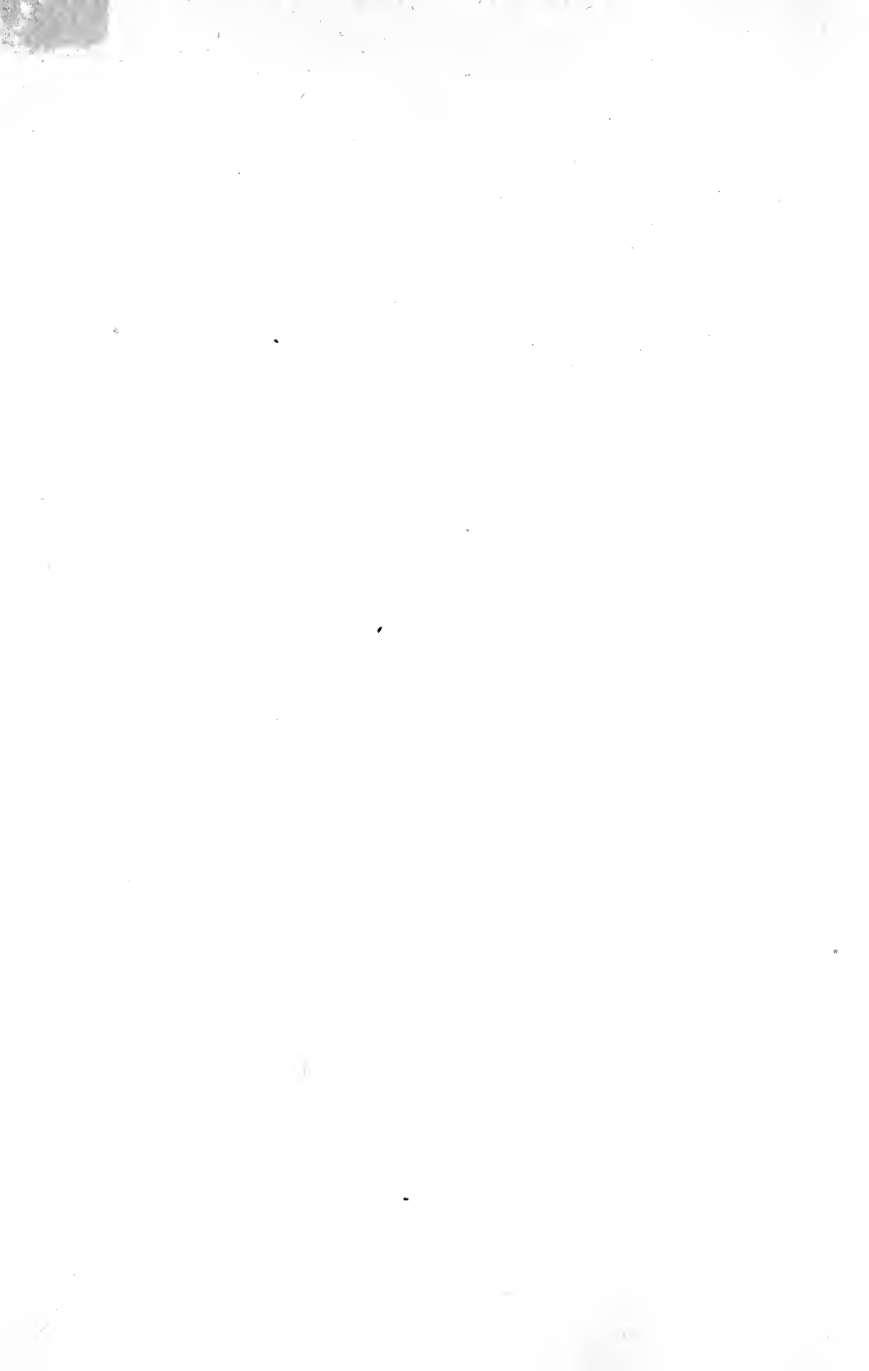
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San Francisco, California  
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*by* MARGARET PARTON

*Whittlesey House*

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LAUGHTER ON THE HILL

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**FOR MY  
MOTHER AND FATHER**



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THERE was a pounding on the door of my cabin, and I heard the excited voice of the Norwegian second mate.

"Vake op! Vake op! Ve are coming soon through the Golden Gate!"

I woke up and tore into my clothes as fast as I could. After twenty-five days on a freighter city clothes felt awkward, and in my rush to get out on deck I buttoned my dress all wrong from the hem up and had to start over again. We were already passing under the Golden Gate Bridge when I finally emerged on deck, into the blackness just before dawn.

On deck the men stood calmly, drinking black coffee from thick white mugs or preparing the lines which would soon tie us to our dock. It was an ordinary trip for them—a few days in a port they all liked, or a day or so in their home town before going on to Portland. They sat on the hatch covers, talking quietly, not even glancing at the black cliffs passing by us so swiftly, or up at the amber lights of the world's longest single span. They had sailed into San Francisco Bay hundreds of times before this, and would do so hundreds of times again. For me it was different—it was the beginning of a new life.

I climbed up to the ship's bridge and, bracing myself in the icy wind, looked at the city where I was going to live.

Silhouetted against a setting half-moon were the seven

hills of San Francisco, the towers and buildings dark, a few houses pricked with light. Above the city hung the morning star, high and bright and cold. Around the bay, at the edges of the dim foothills, were strings of light, yellow, red, green, and blue. And then over the black waters came a cluster of little boats, their riding lights bobbing over the choppy waves. They approached our ship and broke like phosphorescence around the bow and continued on their way out to sea.

"Italian fishing boats," said Captain Larsen.

Over the Berkeley hills the sky faded into gray as we moved slowly along the water front toward our berth beyond the ferry tower. The air was fresh and clear, with the smell of morning and salt water in it, and after a while I could see the rosy flush of sunrise on the underfeathers of the gulls, as they wheeled and wove about our bow. I turned to the captain.

"There can't be any more beautiful port in the world," I said.

"Only Rio," he answered, "only Rio de Janeiro."

The seekers after gold, who had sailed into this magic port almost one hundred years ago and left their ships rotting in waters now covered by the downtown section of the city, must have quivered with the same sense of adventure I now felt. From clippers and steamers they had jumped onto the sandy soil of San Francisco, had made for the golden Mother Lode country—and had returned to build a city. And after them had come the merchants from New England, the patient Orientals, and the scarlet girls who made the Barbary Coast famous, and of whom it was written:

They're dredful shy of forty-niners,  
They turn their noses up at miners.

It was the winter of 1940 now, and not the spring of 1849—but I liked to think that I had something in common with all of them. I had put the East behind me, and accompanied by three suitcases, a folio of Gauguin prints, a wooden flute, and three books—Norman Douglas' *South Wind*, a volume called *How to Write the Short Story*, and a poetry anthology—I was going to make my home in San Francisco. Back in New York I had left my parents, my friends, and two years of postcollege work in publishing and radio. In California I firmly expected to put down roots, to find a way of life, friends, and a job.

"California is more in your personal aura," my father had said. He should know, I thought, for it was his romantic stories of the bucko days of the West which had made New York seemed so sterile. As a reporter on Fremont Older's *Bulletin* he had had plenty of chance to see those days and hear the echoes of earlier ones.

He told me once of interviewing a poor widow whom he had found starving with a new baby in a little dump on Rincon Hill.

"What do you need most of all?" he asked her.

"It's the longing for coffee that's driving me crazy," she answered. The longing was duly recorded on page one.

San Francisco's reaction was typical. For three days, up the steep grades of the hill, toiled the matrons of the city, huffing and puffing, and loaded up to their lorgnettes with assorted groceries—but mostly coffee. At the end of three days the widow opened a grocery store and, according to Dad, made out very well.

I wanted to live in a city like that.

There was another tale: back in the days of the forty-niners, a miner walked down Montgomery Street, carrying a bag of gold dust worth several thousand dollars. He ran into a friend who invited him into a saloon for a drink.

"Leave your bag on the hitching post," the friend said. "Anything left there is safe."

This was done, and the two gentlemen entered the saloon, where they passed a pleasant hour or so. When the miner came out to the hitching post, there was his bag of gold, but on top of it rested a silver dollar weighing down a piece of paper.

On the paper was scrawled the words: "To help along."

These were only two of the stories which endeared to me the city in which I was born and which I had left when I was ten years old. There were other things—the memory of gray fog drifting high over the curved golden roofs of Chinatown; the terraced gardens of Russian Hill; May Day in Golden Gate Park when hundreds of little girls in white dresses loosed multicolored balloons and watched them disappear in the blue sky high above the eucalyptus trees; flower stands and cable cars. I would see them all again; I would learn to know San Francisco as I knew New York—its streets, its monuments, its people—even the name of the mayor, I supposed.

If a denizen of Olympus wandered down from the mountain and tried to tell New Yorkers what those heavenly meadows were like, I am sure they would accuse him of being on the pay roll of the Olympian Chamber of Commerce. The Californian meets the same fate. A geographically divided Hebe, however, I can sometimes hear the ring of my own words in my incredulous ears.

Trapped once more in the East, thinking nostalgically

of the morning when the *West Wind* turned east from the Pacific into the San Francisco Bay, and of the two shining years which followed that day, I admit that the heavenly meadows were crossed by occasional gullies.

There were weeks when the rain beat down without a stop, and I was damp and miserable and fiercely lonely. There were days when the insularity of San Franciscans became unendurable, days when the longing to be in New York where things happened made me feel an exiled ghost, days when I cursed and wept and found relief only in the loud bang of a tin pan flung against the kitchen wall.

But these things I force myself to remember. Spontaneously, thinking of California, I see yellow acacia trees against a polished blue sky, stars reflected in the flat wash of surf at Carmel, laughing friends holding up the wall of my shack against a strong east wind, and I feel again the curious tingle of surprise I felt every time I looked across the hills and bay and said, "I'm happy!"

That cold December, however, my emotions were still hesitant, and as the ship sailed around the tip of the long peninsula on which San Francisco is situated, I contemplated the terraces of its steep hills with a feeling almost of timidity. There, still sleeping in the stucco houses of Pacific Heights, in the garden bungalows of Russian Hill, in the shacks of Telegraph Hill, perhaps in the elegant hotels outlined against the sky from their dominant position on Nob Hill, were people whose lives would entwine with mine. How would I find them? There, white in the glow of the rising sun across the bay, were the myriad shining windows of San Francisco, the chimneys and porches and graduated ranks of houses which spill over the hills for six miles. I shivered and in panic wondered how I would ever find the house that was waiting for me.

To be honest, the chattering teeth of the girl adventurer who had set out so confidently from New York were not due entirely to the wind on the weather bridge.

It was reassuring to see my relatives, gathered in a dawn convention on the pier where the *West Wind* docked. I had vowed that I wasn't going to rely on them for friends or jobs or living quarters and had written them to that effect. But there they were, huddled in the doorway of the pier's big shed, sleepy and cold and welcoming. Aunt Marion, dependable, loving, blunt, bundled in sturdy gray tweeds. Her two sons, aloof and cynical Bob, raucous David. Aunt Sara, the gracious Lady Bountiful of my childhood, her silver hair glowing under a turban of Persian silk, an ancient Chinese jade necklace glimmering against her soft throat. Her husband, Colonel Charles Erskine Scott Wood—Pops or Gaga to generations of children—with flowing white beard, his snowy hair capped by a purple tam-o'-shanter with a bright red pompon.

My sweet Cousin Kay, and Jim, her professor husband who knew the words to all the Gilbert and Sullivan songs. Pops' granddaughter Tash, holding in her arms a fuzzy little red honey bear who turned out to be her new son, Bruce. There they were, familiar and strange at the same time, almost terrifying in their solidarity, their enveloping warmth.

At Solari's, a magnificent French restaurant near the St. Francis Hotel, the waiters blanched as they watched our assemblage pouring through the door, then grinned when they saw the colonel. He had been mixing his own salad dressings there for over twenty years, and they fell all over themselves arranging the tables.

After Pops had conferred with the *maître d'hôtel* over

the choice of omelets, jams, and a light and appropriate wine, the deluge began. We had already settled details of the trip and the health of my parents, so obviously the question of the day was my future in California.

Aunt Sara: "Darling, I think a quiet month in the country, at Los Gatos, would be just the thing for you. Perhaps you could do some writing."

Pops: "Now, Sara, I'm sure Margaret realizes that as part of the world community she should attach herself to some worth-while endeavor of the human spirit in San Francisco in which she can earn her own living . . ."

Kay: "Margaret dear, the children would just love it if you would come and live with us in Berkeley. Of course, the life is quieter than you've had in New York, but—"

Jim: "Why don't you study for your M.A. at the University? I could help you outline a course. . . ."

Sara: "I've been studying astronomy and really, darling, Berenice's Hair is the most exquisite constellation!"

Marion: "You're welcome to stay with me, dear. I'm in a fog pocket, but it's quiet—out beyond Twin Peaks. You could study music and practice on my piano."

Tash: "Of course, if you have asthma you ought to live somewhere across the bay, like San Leandro. But you're welcome to flop on our living room couch. Ken could probably get you a job at the hospital."

David and Bob grinned, and Bruce just gurgled, as the relatives subsided, waiting expectantly for my answer. I took another bite of omelet *aux herbes fines*, and sighed.

"Well, I don't know," I said, lamely.

"You don't know!" An incredulous chorus, followed by a moment of bewildered silence.

"What do you plan to do out here?" asked Aunt Sara gently.

"Well . . . just sort of look around and find out what it's like in California, and—have fun." When you look into the puzzled eyes of eight serious relatives, involved in the world's work, the word "fun" sounds positively indecent.

"Where are you going to live?"

"I'll be impartial. I'm going to a hotel until I find an apartment."

I did, too. Trailed by the disapproving relatives, I plodded across the street, registered at a hotel, and promised I would visit each of them in turn—after I had established myself in San Francisco.

Not counting relatives, I had one friend in San Francisco—a young actor who fortunately for me happened to be out of a job at the moment. Hal possessed a family hand-me-down automobile and a pleasant conviction that I should see all of the city before I chose an establishment. It was the best possible combination for getting to know a new town.

We devoted a day to surveying the other side of the bay, Contra Costa, driving swiftly through the curving streets of Alameda, Oakland, Berkeley. The best thing I saw was a bar called Trader Vic's, where artificial moonlight bathed a wooden shack on the end of a pier and bundles wrapped in Chinese matting leaned against the walls; for a moment I felt I was in the South Seas. But I couldn't live there, and the rest of Oakland and Berkeley looked more fitting for domesticity and commuters than it did for girl adventurers. Turning back to San Francisco over the Bay Bridge, Hal dismissed them accurately.

"Brooklyn and Queens," he said.

The next day we drove through Golden Gate Park out to the western side of San Francisco, where endless rows of



neat stucco houses march almost to the sea. Once, I remembered, this area was covered with ugly little shacks which aroused the particular animus of Arthur McEwen, a newspaper friend of my father's. McEwen used to stride along the beach, glaring at the shacks and thinking of the people who were forced to live in them. When he came to a particularly ugly one he would pick up a rock and heave it through a window. The irate housewife rushing out the front door would find him waiting for her.

"I trust this will replace the broken pane, madam," he would say, bowing from the waist and handing the housewife a \$20 bill.

I didn't like the stucco houses any better than McEwen liked the shacks.

We drove back downtown, along streets lined with the most amazing houses I had ever seen. Brown or white, most of them were wooden, and almost all of them had bay windows crowned with fantastic curlicues and gingerbread. There were towers, cupolas, porticoes, balconies—everything a mad Victorian carpenter could think of. On California Street we passed a firehouse with what looked like a pigeon cote on top, and brownstone sculptured heads of departed firemen jutting from the tortured cornice. Within the firehouse I glimpsed the engines—not flame red, like the ones I knew, but a dark cherry-maroon. That seemed very strange.

"Do you want to live in a guest house?" Hal asked.

"What's that?"

"Rooming houses, really. Mostly mansions built in the bonanza days, and kind of moldy now. There's one."

It was a gigantic edifice, dark brown and littered with the usual jigsaw adornments. A green-and-white glass lamp-

shade, crisscrossed with bronze, stood in one gloomy window between limp lace curtains.

"No!" I said.

Next door a flight of stone steps led up to space and dropped off into an empty lot, where a few wild geraniums blossomed in the dead brown grass.

"What's that—a relic of the earthquake?"

"Don't say earthquake," Hal reproved. "We call it the fire out here, because it was the fire that did the most damage, not the earthquake. You better remember that—like never, never saying Frisco. Yes . . . I suppose the house fell down during the—er—fire."

Hal stopped the car in front of a gigantic temple, Oriental in design, with an inscription in Arabic over the door.

"Ever hear the story about this place?"

"No."

"Well," he said, fishing under the seat for a battered package of cigarettes, "the Shriners built it a few years back, and it cost a lot of money to build. The architect worked hard on the job, and naturally he felt that like any painter or sculptor, he ought to be permitted to put his initials on some obscure corner of the building. But the Shriners said no, that would profane the temple.

"As a finishing touch they handed him an Arabic inscription to be cut in that big stone over the entrance. He went ahead and finished the job, and the joint was dedicated and turned out to be a big success and one of the show places of the town.

"Well, a year or so later, a big shot orientalist from Europe came to the University of California, and the Shriners asked him over to cast an eye at their temple. With all of the boys around him he stood across the street there and slowly gave the place the once-over.

"The tradition is perfect," he said. "It is beautifully done. But what's this?" He was reading the inscription cut into the big stone.

"What does it say?" the boys asked.

"It says: 'Great is Allah! And greatly to be praised! But greater is Rousseau, the architect!'"

At Grant Avenue, the main street of Chinatown, we were halted by a Chinese funeral. A church band, playing "Nearer My God to Thee," led the procession of long black cars. At the end a group of Chinese boys in white made ear-piercing sounds on native instruments.

"San Francisco is wonderful," I said.

"The pagan influence is still strong," Hal agreed. "Billy Sunday said it was one of the few cities he couldn't convert. He said people who lived in San Francisco couldn't believe they were damned."

Still house hunting, we explored the Marina, a section along the bay where the glamorous fair of 1915 was held. Prim gardens bordered the wide street, surrounded imposing homes, served as playgrounds for subdued toddlers.

"Oh, dear," I sighed.

We climbed the steep streets of Russian Hill, drove along its roller-coaster grades. The houses were lovely, the view was beautiful, and I even looked at three apartments. But the rents were too high for me. And besides—

"Isn't there any place where I could be close to the harbor, and watch the *West Wind* sail in and out?" I asked wistfully.

Hal looked at me and nodded wisely.

"I should have known," he said. "Of course. For one in your emotional state, my chick, there is only one possible roosting place in San Francisco—Telegraph Hill."

TELEGRAPH HILL? From our vantage point on the slopes of Russian Hill, Telegraph stood out sharply against the blue of the bay and sky. The white houses which banked its slopes shimmered in the afternoon sun; its top was crowned by dark trees and a slim gray tower. On two sides the hill dropped off to the water front; on the others, I knew, were Chinatown and the Italian section. I remembered that twenty years ago some artists we knew had lived on the hill, in little wooden houses built from the boards of the tremendous sign which welcomed the world-circling fleet in 1908.

We dipped sharply down Russian Hill, passed by a park green with weeping willows, where fat old men with red faces and white mustaches dreamed in the sun, and in low gear climbed the five blocks which led to the top of Union Street. With my muscles soft from a month at sea, I couldn't picture toiling up that grade on foot, but in time I learned to run up the five blocks almost like one of the goats which used to be tethered outside the Irish shanties at the top. San Franciscans get that way—they love to take visitors up the steepest hills and listen to them pant.

"Look," said Hal, pointing. "I noticed the other day that it was for rent."

We rounded the top of the hill and came to rest against the curb. The street slanted sharply to a concrete railing. Beyond was a sheer drop of a hundred feet, then a block

or so of warehouses, the water front with its long wharves—and the bay. Along the street was a row of one-, two-, and three-story frame houses, painted green and white, and perched several feet above the street level, with twisting steps leading up to miniature front porches.

The house in the middle had a pointed red roof, outlined with white gingerbread carving. A white-banistered flight of steps wound crazily to the porch, mainly occupied by a bay window, which had evidently been added to the flat front of the house as an afterthought. The paint didn't match. Below was a garage into which no car—unless winged—could have made its way.

"They cut down the level of the street ten feet when they put in the new construction last year," Hal said. "It stranded the garages up there."

But I was looking at the house with the pointed red roof. The door was open, and I noticed that on the glass panes, in reverse, was inscribed "The Barkley." I never did find out where that door came from. The large, low-ceilinged room was bare, the wooden floor squeaked. Against one wall was a brick fireplace with the tiniest recess I had ever seen. Hal told me that it was a Telegraph Hill custom to build bricks around a Franklin stove, pipe and all, and call it a fireplace. Later on, when I had a fire going all evening (only one lump of coal could be burned at a time), the walls used to heat up so that in alarm I would wet them down with a Flit gun filled with water.

The rear door of the living room—a horrid affair with imitation stained-glass wallpaper covering the large glass pane at the top—led to a tiny porch, about four feet wide, enclosed by uprights and plywood. The kitchen and bathroom, small but adequate (or so I thought then), opened off the porch. In the manner of Telegraph Hill bathrooms,

the water was heated in a large cylinder hanging over the bathtub, with a gas plate underneath, which, like the fireplace, generated a terrific heat. When I took a bath I was scorched on the shoulders and dusted gently with the rust which kept flaking through the paint. There was no icebox in the kitchen. "We don't use them much out here," Hal said.

Five steps down from the porch was a pocket handkerchief-sized garden, half concrete and half soil which I later discovered might just as well have been concrete. Most Telegraph Hill soil is adobe, and in the early days houses were built from it. In summer it cakes hard, and in the winter it is a slimy clay. Every petunia and nasturtium I planted withered away, leaving the hardy geraniums and wandering Jew in triumphant possession of the garden. Once I bought a load of soil from a wholesale florist downtown and, lacking a hammer, used the heel of a shoe to build a flower box (from twisted nails and old boards I picked up on the street) over the moss-covered washtubs, which lent a domestic touch to the back wall of the shack.

The California poppies, sweet William, and morning-glories I planted in it grew pleasantly, until one afternoon when two soldiers became overinspired by the pursuit planes which used to fly low over the wharves and under the Bay Bridge. With wild cries and spread arms they zoomed down from the flat roof of the house below mine, which formed one wall of the garden. That was the end of the California poppies, sweet William, and morning-glories—and almost the end of the soldiers. Californians have marvelous resilience.

The day I took the shack my landlady was astride the pointed roof of the porch, which she had apparently just constructed. She climbed down quickly and looked me over.

A short woman with a puckered face and a great deal of lipstick, she wore a sun suit and a fur jacket. The long garters from her girdle, their metal clasps glinting in the sunlight, flapped about her white thighs, and she wore an emerald ring the size of a croquet ball on one withered hand.

"Hello, dearie," she gurgled. "I'm Mrs. Beems—but everyone calls me Elfie."

Proudly she showed me through the shack again, placing a delicate foot over the knotholes in the floor, through which one could look down and see the dirt garage beneath. In view of the fact that the sun porch was still under construction, she said, I could have the works for \$25 a month—and no lease. And for that she would also throw in a little furniture she had accumulated in various garages and hideouts around the hill.

I looked at the flimsy walls, which seemed to be held up by carpet tacks, at the undustable wall boards, and the knot-holes. Then, while Hal grinned and Elfie tapped an impatient foot, I walked over to the window and looked down at the ships in their berths. I couldn't get any closer to them.

"I'll take it forever," I said.

The furniture turned out to be one bedspring, without legs; a mattress from which all the tufts were gone, so that the cotton would invariably collect in one end and I would have to get up in the middle of the night and shake the thing out, thereby snowing the room with lint; a yellow bureau, against which I had no legitimate complaints; a wicker table which unraveled itself with a mysterious persistence; two or three chairs which collapsed unless propped





up with orange boxes; and the oddest collection of kitchen utensils I've ever seen assembled.

Several months later I told Mrs. Beems that I was developing a shape like a corkscrew from trying to sleep on the tuftless mattress, and she unearthed a single cot and a three-quarter size mattress, which were a little better, except that the mattress kept sliding from the bed every time I turned over. Also, the springs were coming out in the bottom and had to be held in place with a board supported by a pile of bricks.

The whole place reminded me of the time Dad and I crossed the country in a rumble seat. For a thousand miles we stubbornly tried to shield ourselves from sun and rain with umbrellas. On the Kansas plains, however, the wind grew too much for us, so we stopped and had a canvas awning constructed, which snapped on the car top in front and was supported by two steel rods in back. The only trouble was that the wind bellied the canvas down onto Dad's head, squashing his hat over his eyes. For a while we held the canvas up with a long stick, but soon the stick started to make a hole in the canvas, so we had to put a pillow on top of it. We took turns holding the pillow on the stick all the way across Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

One by one the relatives came to inspect my new abode.

"Are you sure you'll be safe here?"

"Isn't it awfully hard to dust?"

"Is there a good sturdy lock on the door?" (Later I went for weeks without ever locking the door.)

"I'm sure it's charming—but wouldn't you be happier in something modern?"

Always generous, they deluged me with blankets and

spreads, dishes and mops. Aunt Sara sent up a crate of rare Chinese and Mexican vases, beautiful blues and oranges which looked uneasily out of place but which certainly gave tone to the shack.

Another aunt, visiting from the East, spoke for them all, I'm afraid, when she wrote Mother grimly: "Margaret is living in a hovel."

But I didn't care. The shack was Versailles and Buckingham Palace to me, and for two years it remained the center of my life. In spite of the shaky construction which made it tremble in the strong sea winds, in spite of the leaks in the roof through which rain dripped on my books and my clothes, in spite of the persistent ants which swarmed into the kitchen every summer, it had the raffish charm of a mongrel puppy, and now, remembering the West, I miss it as I miss my old dog Christopher, the endearing Airedale of my childhood.

FOR almost a month I ignored the shack, living in a dream world in which the only reality was the life along the water front which spread out below my windows. I was still so homesick for the *West Wind*—a rusty freighter to her sailors, but a fabulous galleon to me—that I wanted only to sit in the bay window all day, watching the cargo hoists swing crates into the holds of ships along the Embarcadero and letting my eyes move over the stretch of blue bay, the island of Yerba Buena (once known as Goat's Island), the span of the Oakland Bay Bridge, and the hills of Berkeley, hazy across six miles of water.

I forgot my resolutions about finding a job, making friends, presenting the inevitable letters of introduction in my purse. The only time I left my post at the window was to wear a track to the library, where I procured such books as *Cargo Handling at Ports*, *Notes on the Practical Duties of Shipmasters*, *The Shipmaster's Business Companion and Business Guide* and *San Francisco's Ocean Trade*. I read them, too, and I even considered, in a hazy way, trying to get a job on a tugboat or on a Russian ship, where they allow women sailors, or trying to get a job as a barmaid in a water-front saloon. . . . Wonderful ideas, but in the end I just leaned out the window, feeling like the blessed damozel at the golden bar of heaven.

The boats I liked best were the chubby little tugs, with their bright red stacks. They berthed at a wharf at the foot

of Greenwich Street, and the cluster of their crimson smokestacks was the brightest spot on the gray-blue expanse of buildings and water. Next to them was the pier where the sleek Japanese liners came in, their hulls black, their superstructures gleaming white, the red circle large on their bows.

Along the Embarcadero would come the engines, puffing faintly in the clear California air, and then the freight trains. The great drums of petroleum would be unloaded, and the piles of scrap iron, and the cargo hoists would reach down and lift the black drums and the loads of iron into the holds of the Japanese ships. I preferred to watch the Swedish ships, cream colored and blue, their flags fluttering at the next dock.

Out in the channel were anchored the larger ships, and from their sides the lighters came, carrying on their flat decks the copra, sugar, coffee, and vegetable oils, the paper and burlap, the fertilizer and nitrates which are San Francisco's chief imports. And down the muddy waters of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, which wind through San Pablo Bay to the north, past Vallejo and Richmond, the barges came, heavily loaded with lumber, flour, and rice, canned, dried, and fresh fruits, canned and cured fish, explosives—San Francisco's exports.

I soon discovered that by standing on the edge of my bathtub and scrambling madly I could climb from the bathroom window onto the flat roof of the house below mine, where I would unroll a Chinese mat and, wrapped in sunlight, lie in comfort, semicircled by the panorama of the bay. It was here, a jug of red California wine close at hand, that I read the history of the harbor.

When Richard Henry Dana sailed into the bay in 1838 he saw hundreds of red deer, and stags with high branching

antlers, leaping about on the hills on either side of the Gate. And he saw, too, that the little town of Yerba Buena was already an important source of supply of tallow and grain, hides and frijoles for the Russian whalers which came down from Asitka. A "promising town," Dana thought it, which "might become the most important trading place on the coast."

Lying on my roof, watching a 4,000-ton freighter steam slowly down the channel, I would try to visualize those early days—the cluster of wooden shacks and adobe hovels, the bumpy trail across the waste of sand dunes to the Mission Dolores, a Spanish packet anchored in the lee of Goat's Island. . . .

With the eruption of the golden fountain, shacks grew into hovels, hovels into hotels. Dirt and sand were filled into the spaces between the abandoned ships. With doors cut into their hulls the ships became houses and stores. Roads so deep in mud that a mule would sink up to its belly were boarded over. Saloons, gambling halls, and brothels clustered about Portsmouth Square, where on July 9, 1846, the United States flag was first raised. The town quivered and vibrated with excitement—and so did I, reading and visualizing and drinking good red wine.

Gamblers wore diamonds, and miners favored gold watches weighing a pound. Silks and laces from Paris graced the windows of low frame shops. Chinese in blue coolie suits and immense basket hats padded softly on Washington Street, and Mexicans in scarlet sashes and bright serapes mingled with swarthy sailors from all the seaports of the world. One of the abandoned ships, turned into a restaurant, carried a sign: "Coffee and doughnuts, \$1.00. A square meal, \$1.50. A regular gorge, \$2.50."

Over the waters of the bay now glided many ships, and

with hundreds of easy-fisted sailors rolling ashore, the San Francisco water front became one of the most dangerous in the world. Square-rigged sailing vessels stopped at San Francisco to stow in deep holds the freight, fish, and agricultural products the bay area was beginning to produce. Barges and river boats, as they do now, came down the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers, heavily loaded with produce. The first ferries were established to carry people to the growing communities around the bay. The windjammers of the Alaskan packers fleet put in regularly from the icy waters to the north, and the whaling ships anchored every year in Whaler's Bay, off Sausalito.

I began playing a game with the harbor. "Look at the steamship," I would say, gazing at the empty waters. "That's the *New Orleans*, and her master is a resourceful young man named William C. Ralston. He's never been here before, and he doesn't like the looks of the town much, because it's been charred five times in the last year by fire. But just the same he's going to stay here. He's going to found the Bank of California, to build the Palace Hotel, to be known as one of the Renaissance princes of the West, and to live in the kind of splendor which made the bonanza days the most lavish any city had ever seen. And he's going to be ruined by the bankers and die in those waters off North Beach," which I could see if I turned my head a little. . . .

And then there was Robert Louis Stevenson. He had lived in the house next to mine, I had been told, although I didn't know whether to believe it or not, as Stevenson's houses in San Francisco seem to be as plentiful as are Washington's overnight beds in the East. Still, it was a tie of sorts. And I liked, too, the Stevenson monument in Ports-

mouth Plaza, with its golden galleon and its quotation from his *Christmas Sermon*, and in fact I liked Stevenson.

So I felt very sad when in imagination I watched the yacht *Casco* sail out through the Gate, and knew what he did not know—that his search for health in the South Seas would be in vain, that he would die there and be buried there and that he would never again see these hills, this harbor.

The trouble with playing games with historical characters is that you always know how they die. But that couldn't be helped, and in the case of Jack London it didn't matter, because it was his brawling, vigorous life on the waters and edges of the bay which lighted my mind into pictures.

"Hi there, Jack London!" I called to the young oyster pirate in the mud flats and estuaries of Oakland, way across the bay. "You're not a sailor or a coal heaver or any of the things you've tried to be . . . you're a writer, of all things. You don't know it yet, but you will!"

More cynically I watched him supervise the building of the *Snark*, the forty-five foot ketch that cost \$30,000 to build and used up uncounted miles of frayed nerves. She was supposed to be a perfect jewel of a ship, but she was jinxed from the start. I watched her sail out through the Gate, with Jimmy Hopper's football sweater flapping at her mast, sixteen-year-old Martin Johnson aboard her as cook, and Jack London at her tiller, sublimely unaware that the damned ship would never stop leaking, that he would get sick in the South Seas and sell her to slave traders.

"You're making a bad mistake!" I shouted to him, but he didn't hear me, and the ketch dipped below the horizon of my mind. It served him right that the *Snark* should be discovered a few years ago, forlorn, stripped of her expensive fittings, half sunk in the mud of a Los Angeles harbor.

The earthquake and fire never fitted into my game, nor did I make them part of it. The picture of the earth shaking under my beloved city, the flames and smoke rising from her hills, the people, terrified and bereft, camping out in the parks while their homes burned and the landmarks they loved crumbled into rubble—this was not material for light-hearted drama, and I slid over it quickly in my imagination.

But one earthquake story of Dad's I couldn't resist. A brawny stevedore had been making the rounds of the waterfront dives, and in the early hours of the morning he reeled into a bar on Howard Street.

"Gimme a boilermaker!" he shouted, thumping his hairy fist on the oak bar. Joe, the proprietor, sized up the drunk's condition and refused. For half an hour they argued, the stevedore growing angrier and angrier, Joe more and more firm. Finally the stevedore flexed his muscles with rage and swore: "If you don't give me a drink I'll knock this damned bar of yours over and wreck the joint!"

"Go ahead," said Joe.

The stevedore placed one mighty shoulder under the bar's rim and heaved. As he did so the earth shook, the bar went over, the walls caved in, and the wooden roof came tumbling down. After the dust settled, the stevedore crawled out from under the wreckage, dragging Joe after him.

"Geez, I'm sorry, Joe," he said, "I didn't know I could do it."

The last picture in my game I loved as much as the San Franciscans did who gathered at the water front in the days when the picture was fresh. This was the arrival of the Japanese picture brides—girls who were chosen in Japan by marriage brokers, on order from Japanese in America



who felt that they had prospered sufficiently to support a wife. After exchange and approval of photographs, money was sent to the girl's family, and she was dispatched to her future husband.

As the ship sailed into the harbor, the little brides, gay in their delicate silk kimonos, would sit cross-legged on the deck, their lacquered make-up boxes before them while they placed perfume between their sandaled toes and smoothed the shining wings of their black hair. Satisfied then with their immaculate appearance, they would rise and solemnly drop hundreds of pieces of red paper over the side of the ship—hundreds of fluttering prayers for the happiness of their marriages. The papers would dip and fly among the crowds of gray gulls following the ship, then skim down onto the white wake and float gently on the receding ripples. The custom was only partially halted by missionaries, who maintained that such pagan observations on the very doorstep of a Christian country seriously threatened the morality of all Americans.

My mother, covering a story about the arrival of the last picture brides in 1912, fell into conversation with a Japanese potato king from Salinas, in the waiting room at Angel Island, the immigration station. His bride, carrying his picture and an identifying number, approached, was royally accepted, and they were married immediately in a civil ceremony.

She was a slender creature, swaying on tiny feet, and very shy. She wore a gray kimono, with flights of pale blue herons rising from hem to shoulder. It was lined with red silk. In her exquisite kimono she made a graceful contrast to her husband, who wore an ill-fitting black, store-bought suit and creaky yellow shoes. But he was embarrassed and unhappy. Turning to my mother, he begged her to help him

buy his wife some real American clothes, so that she would look like a lady. In his tremendous limousine he threw a steamer blanket over his trembling wife so that pedestrians would not see his degradation.

At the Emporium, a bustling department store which the potato king considered very elegant, he asked that his wife be put into a "corsi" and a "toopeesoo," which Mother translated as a corset and a two-piece suit.

Two hours later the bewildered girl emerged from the fitting rooms, rigid in an iron corset, draped in a shepherd's plaid suit, balancing an enormous plumed hat on her tiny head, and wobbling nervously in high-heeled shoes. In her flowing Japanese clothes her husband had looked at her with indifference, but as he contemplated his Oriental Galatea in American clothes a flame of love and desire swept over his face, and he held her arm proudly as she hobbled out of the store.

The picture brides come no more and the clipper ships are long since gone. The ferry boats, with their violinists and crowds of gray gulls, have been replaced by the soaring steel of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Oakland Bay Bridge; the ferry building at the foot of Market Street, with its pointed tower and its flower stands, is almost deserted. The smoke of civilization rises from industries which ring the harbor.

But the tugs have red funnels, the freighters year after year bring to the water front the smells and spices of the Orient; Fisherman's Wharf is still a glimpse of Naples on a misty morning, and the water has not changed color.

The line of far hills against my eyes, the deep blue of the water, with its long ruffles of wind, the soft fog in my face as I strode along the dark water front, the look of sun-

rise and sunset—these were physical experiences which made my life seem one with those San Franciscans whom I loved and who had been here before me, who had seen and smelt and loved the same mountains, the same islands, the same bay.

In other cities when buildings change there is nothing to tie one to the past. In San Francisco, though buildings may burn or decay, from the hilltops one looks outward where the gulls fly and nothing is changed.

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*EMOTIONAL MUSCLES AND BULLS  
IN THE CHINA SHOP*

I BEGAN to feel like an Amazon. Lying in the sun all day I acquired a flamboyant tan—the happy mark of those fortunates who have saved up enough money to stop working for a while—and even my dark hair began to lighten with what, in my more optimistic moments, I liked to think of as a “golden sheen.”

Gradually, lying in the sun, reading, looking at the bay, I began to relax, to feel free. In my heart there came a slow knowledge that at last I had found a place where, if only for the present, I could be happy. The insecurities, the frustrations, the involved relationships which had perplexed me in New York and had made me feel that I was a gloomy introvert for whom all life would be a minor form of torture, all these began to slip away. I realized that something quite wonderful was happening to me, and I put aside my games and books and tried to think about the present instead of the past.

But I found I didn't want to think. Everything was too beautiful, the weather too perfect, the sun too warm. I felt like acting, not thinking. I didn't know then that this resistance to analytical thinking was an effect of the California atmosphere which I would eventually fight with the fervor of Calvin, if not the strength!

It was time I was looking the town over and meeting some friends. Already letters from my parents were growing serious: “Are you making any friends, dear?” or “Isn't

it time you looked for a job?" Never one to look for a job before I had to, I decided on the friends first.

I had letters of introduction, of course, and many of my parents' friends from the old days were still living in San Francisco. On Russian Hill, in a penthouse whose views swept a circle of the city, lived "Aunt" Flora, a magnificent and aging dowager, whose stately life had taken her from Paris to Russia to San Francisco. As the wife of a shipping magnate, she had spent her days in jeweled boredom until she chanced to meet my parents at some coincidental rat race. Thereafter she spent her time with the Russian Hill Bohemians, was occasionally scandalized, and perfectly happy. I used to go over to her house just to listen to her tell about that meeting with my parents, back in 1914.

"I walked into the room wearing black velvet and pearls," she would say, "terribly afraid of all those arty people I had heard about. And there was your mother in white dotted Swiss playing the piano, with her eyes sparkling. And my dear, she was the most brilliant person I ever met. And the fieriest little Red you ever saw!" That was one of the parts I always loved—Aunt Flora's description of Mother's mild socialism seemed to show a deplorable lack of political discrimination on her part but certainly a laudable tolerance from the wife of a shipping magnate.

"And then," she would continue, fixing another round of gin rickeys, "your mother introduced me to all those fascinating intellectuals, and really, it was quite like being back in Paris again.

"And your father! He was so handsome and had such black and penetrating eyes—I felt quite shivery when he offered to take me home. I was really quite beautiful in those days . . . anyway, I invited him in for some sherry,

and do you know, he sat there for an hour, talking about Veblen and Eugene Debs!

"Right in the middle of the conversation the drunk above us fell downstairs and your father had to go out and put him to bed, but he came right back and started talking about Santayana."

It was endlessly fascinating to me, and like a child who demands *Cinderella* over and over, I would beg Aunt Flora to tell me again about the time she met my father and mother. How everyone was dressed . . . what the room looked like . . . what they all talked about. Aunt Flora and I used to sit up long past midnight, getting gently drunk on the gin rickeys, and crying softly for the good days that were gone.

I think now that the reason I loved the story so much was that I have always had an unadmitted longing to belong to the kind of society, the kind of group in which my parents lived in those unperplexed days before the World War, and Aunt Flora, more than anyone I ever knew, gave a warm and personal picture of that world I never saw.

In Chicago, Dad had worked and played with the group which gave Chicago its renaissance in the early 1900's. He told great tales of their Gargantuan exploits and heroic hoaxes, and when I saw *The Front Page* I was sure it wasn't exaggerated. But where was this group in my generation?

Living in New York's Greenwich Village before it became a self-conscious Bohemia, Mother told of picnics on top of Washington Square arch with all of the fabulous people who were at once wise and young and gay. Her favorite story was of Sinclair Lewis' yodeling bench—early every evening he would approach his favorite bench in Washington Square and, bowing from the waist to any occupant

of the bench, would say: "Pardon me, madam, but it is now time for me to yodel on this bench." In lordly possession he would yodel for an hour, then calmly rise and drift off into the dusk. Why didn't my friends yodel?

In San Francisco, Dad, as city editor of *The Bulletin*, and as a good guy in his own right, knew some of the best minds in the literary world, and Mother, an impatient intellectual who had insisted on going on a picnic across the bay the day before I was born, was the nucleus of a group which managed to combine brilliant achievement with a great deal of pleasant nonsense. Where were they now?

Yes, I was a snob. Not a snob for names, but a snob for the kind of people who sounded as if they had a good time without wasting it. In my adolescence I had gone through the stage of scorning the gregarious mob and fancying myself as a lone animal stalking the earth in magnificent disdain. Now I wanted the security of a group—but not the kind of group I had found in sorority houses or union meetings. In New York I had looked in vain for the modern counterpart of the prewar groups and had not found it. There was no unifying factor among any of the people I knew there. Mavis was a Communist and she scorned anyone who didn't follow the line. Jack wouldn't talk about anything but ballet and e e cummings—they couldn't be combined. Stella was a pacifist and believed that consumer's cooperatives were going to save the world, while Heywood only came to life when he listened to Calypso or boogie woogie. They couldn't be combined either. It seemed as if my generation had fallen apart at its intellectual seams.

There was no Bohemia in New York any more, and anyway Bohemia was not what I was looking for. Berets and India-print lamp shades, Dali by candlelight, and Dada for tiffin were not my dish.

But neither were the people I met at Aunt Flora's cocktail parties. They were the San Franciscans who lived in the solid grandeur of the Palace Hotel and the glitter of the Mark Hopkins. Lunching in the central rotunda of the Palace, that elegant dining room which once was a circular drive-in for carriages, they would pick at their \$3.50 lobsters and complain of the decadence of the West. Sipping a cocktail at the Top o' the Mark, the glass-enclosed cocktail lounge on the top of the tallest hotel on Nob Hill, they would discuss in a desultory fashion the New York theater season, the monstrous hat of the bitch across the room . . . and every night, out of boredom and lack of anything to say, they played gin rummy or hearts.

There were other choices, of course. Across the bay in Berkeley there lived a young couple—family friends from way back. She was a museum specialist and he was a professor at the University of California. Quite often I would take a train across the bay and spend a day in what I came more and more to think of as cloistered precincts. They were wonderful people and I loved them dearly, and they certainly did their best to introduce me to intelligent young people. But somehow the polite evenings, with the whispered talk and San Francisco museum gossip, made me feel very much like the bull in the china shop.

I would sit in a purple velvet chair, my feet politely crossed on the ancient Persian carpet, one hand balancing precariously an ash tray the size of a Canadian dime, the other holding a thimbleful of magnificent muscatel, and struggle against a mad desire to be at a shooting gallery, or to be bellowing "Bell Bottom Trousers" while Dad twanged his guitar under our grape arbor at home.

"Proust—" someone would murmur. "Economic determinism—" hissed someone else. "Huxley?" tentatively of-



ferred the tall colleague from the English department. I thought suddenly of Dad's ideal art museum. It would have Fra Angelicas and Botticellis, he had suggested, but there would be sawdust on the marble floors and a carved bar with good draught beer at the end of the room. People would sing and make toasts to the Madonnas and be hearty and natural and gay. Make art a part of your life, he always said, but don't be so damned hushed about it!

At a New Year's Eve party I met an embarrassed little sculptor named Jacques Schnier. Almost shyly he invited me to come to tea and see his things. I knew his work and accepted eagerly.

Mr. Schnier didn't know it then, and I've forgotten whether I told him, but he lived in The House of the Grand Passion—or rather, he lived in that part of it which once had been a sunken garden and was simply roofed over to make a new apartment. (It's lovely not to have to worry about heating problems in San Francisco. That is, landlords don't worry; they simply go on the theory that it's as warm as Los Angeles all year round and look blank when anyone mentions "furnace." Tenants don't worry either, because it wouldn't do them any good. They just wrap up in blankets during the cold weather.)

But about Mr. Schnier and his house.

The House of the Grand Passion was, as legend had it, built before the earthquake and fire by an Eastern traction magnate for his mistress, an opera singer who needed a home to match the dimensions of her voice. As the house was embedded on the eastern slope of Russian Hill, at the corner of Vallejo and Taylor Streets, and as automobiles in those days were unable to climb the steep slopes, all building materials had to be carried up. But the enormous gray stucco mansion, with its secret rooms, porticoes, chandeliers,

and all other appurtenances of grand passion, gradually rose on the hillside. Its plan was simple for it was built to fit a voice: one huge room dominated the house and around it and over it clustered many tiny rooms, none larger than a modern kitchenette, whose purpose no one could fathom, unless they were for Madame to change costumes in.

The house was finally, triumphantly finished, and Madame made ready to move in. Then, the day before she was to take possession, from her temporary quarters in Oakland she felt the earth move and watched San Francisco burn. As she watched, her sins rose up and smote her, and although the house was saved from the fire, she refused to occupy it. The fire was God's exclusive judgment on her soul, she told the traction magnate, and she went off to join the Salvation Army. The magnate sadly returned to the East, where God's visitations were less pronounced, abandoning his orphan house to the whims of fate.

For many years the house remained empty, the dust collected on the ballroom floors. In fall the ivy leaves over the pergolas drifted into empty fountains, in spring the yellow mustard crowded the long grass on the unkempt terraces. Then one day Satu Kelly, a Eurasian actor, drifted into town, spied the house, and conceived a great idea.

Mr. Kelly rented the house from whatever corporation then had it in tow and sent out embossed invitations to one hundred leading San Francisco clubwomen. For only \$5 an evening, he told them, they could listen to him read Ibsen in the majestic setting of the House of the Grand Passion. They were delighted at the suggestion, and the first evening scores of them flocked up the stone stairways to get cultured. What's more, they bought season tickets in advance—only \$50 for the series.

Satu didn't disappoint them. The musty ballroom was

fitted with squeaking chairs which he had hired from a near-by undertaker, and over the mantel, elaborately carved with gloomy symbols, flickered a tiny alcohol lamp, throwing a wavering green shadow on the Eurasian's tuber-like face. In one hand he held a long white candle which glowed on the blood-red copy of Ibsen which he held in his other. The dowagers shivered with delight.

All in all, the first reading was a great success. Unfortunately, the next night the ballroom mysteriously caught fire, and though it was only slightly damaged, Mr. Kelly claimed that the setting for his readings had been spiritually destroyed and he left town hurriedly, still in possession of advance subscription sales.

The years passed and the mansion remained vacant. In the early 1920's my family moved into the house next door. As a child I remember playing under a fuchsia bush in the front garden, and looking up through its branches to the gray bulk of what, in my fanciful childhood, I liked to call the Dream House.

Perhaps it caught my attention because of the flickering blue and green lights, which used to appear and disappear against the blackened windowpanes at night. They were like fireflies, and I used sometimes to wake up late at night and through my open casement dreamily watch the little lights glow on and off in the house across the garden. Naturally, they only reaffirmed my belief in brownies.

One night, however, lights flared in the supposedly deserted mansion, and gunfire echoed down Taylor Street. After that there were no more firefly lights.

Years later I discovered that government men, less credulous than I of the brownie theory, had traced certain well-known opium addicts to the house, where the ingenious smokers had discovered a subterranean tunnel leading from

the steep hillside into the subbasement. Equipped with Chinese mats, the tiny rooms made perfect cubicles for the addicts, and for many months the dregs of Chinatown and what was left of the Barbary Coast had been stealing furtively into the House of the Grand Passion to roll their little brown pellets over the shimmering blue flames of the alcohol lamps.

I remember a less sinister scene, which took place in the house when I was about nine years old. One of the annual artists' balls, which used to delight San Franciscans until they were taken over and commercialized by the chamber of commerce, was held in the great ballroom where once Satu had given culture to the dowagers.

Cozy in my Dr. Denton's, chewing excitedly on the end of a pigtail, I knelt on my bed and through the eucalyptus trees looked across the moonlit garden and into the ballroom's lighted windows. Every hill in San Francisco was represented by a contingent of artists, all dressed according to some theme. Russian Hill, for instance, represented all the psychoses recently exposed by the new god, Freud. One man in a long green gown with an enormous flower nodding from his head was, of course, a narcissus complex. Another, dressed in a little Lord Fauntleroy suit, was a mother fixation. These I remember only vaguely, but Mother, in a black and red robe, which was her conception of dementia praecox, is still vivid in my memory.

My favorite group was the Telegraph Hill contingent. They all came as goats, the traditional animal of the hill, and a splendid sight they were as they danced into the glowing ballroom. The men wore brown ram skins, which they had bought down at the abattoir south of Market Street, and large papier-mâché hooves covered their feet. Their heads carried rakish little horns. The women wore

white goatskins, which crossed from neck to waist with one breast almost bare. Garlands of roses hung about their necks. I remember still the fairy-tale excitement I felt at the mythological scene, and how I clapped my hands and bounced up and down on the bed, wanting the guests never to go home or the house to be dark again.

And now, here I was having tea with Mr. Schnier, in his roofed-over garden in the House of the Grand Passion. The mansion itself had become some kind of club and had apparently settled down to a conventional existence. His apartment, however, was not conventional. The floor was tiled, as it had been when the room was a garden, and the concrete walls were still covered with flourishing vines. At one end was a flight of steps leading upwards above a fountain, almost to the ceiling where the carved ends of the pergola supports rested. Particularly charming was the way the vines reached out from the wall and curled around the arms and legs of the exquisite statues which lined the walls.

We sat on Chinese teakwood chairs and drank Hu-Kwa tea out of green Chinese bowls, and discussed art in San Francisco, psychoanalysis, and the technique of carving mahogany, which I had once tried to do myself. And again, although it was one of the most charming afternoons I ever spent in San Francisco, I began to have the desperate bull-in-the-china-shop feeling. I had been gently polite and talked of beauty all my life. Had I grown impatient of the things, the people, the conversations I had always admired, simply because I had changed my locale? Surely the consciously set, delicate, and fragile scene could be fitted into the group life I was seeking? Or had my trip on the freighter turned me into a coarse wench, fit only for brawls and barrooms? Was the gigantic California stage setting

having too powerful an effect on my emotional muscles?

After I said good-by I stepped down to the street and climbed the stairs to the garden where I had played as a child. Yes, the fuchsia bush was still there, the flowers still dancing ladies in their purple and magenta. But it was too small . . . I couldn't fit under its branches now. Somehow I was depressed, wondering for the first time whether it had been right for me to come back to San Francisco . . . and wondering, also, where on earth I really belonged.

IT WAS probably a time for introspection, but I was in no mood for soul searching. Deciding to forego my excursions into the realm of possible friends for the moment, I set out to explore Telegraph Hill, to which I already had an allegiance almost approaching patriotism.

One of the pleasantest things about San Francisco is that within five minutes of the downtown business section you can find little open fields, with California poppies and lupin sprinkled about, or a grove of eucalyptus trees, half an acre of wild red geraniums, or a green lawn.

On Telegraph Hill these country notes are surrounded by a conglomeration of old-style Italian apartment houses which march up the hill in flat-roofed terraces, by shacks like mine, clustering near the top of the hill, and by snooty apartment houses, some of them embellished with surrealist bas-reliefs. Crowning the top of the hill is Coit Tower, a massive fluted column, built with funds left by the late Lillie Hitchcock Coit, a San Francisco lady who was known as "a friend of the fire fighters."

When the tower went up in the early 1930's, there was tremendous opposition from all of San Francisco's artists, who complained that the tower, some 230 feet high, was completely out of balance with the shape and height of the hill, which of course it is. But the money was there, the city fathers were adamant, and the monstrosity went up. Now the artists ignore the whole thing as much as they can,

and talk wistfully of the days when there was just a wild meadow at the top of the Hill and a ring of eucalyptus trees.

In the very early days of the city, there had been the old telegraph station, which gave the hill its name. The station served to advise the city of the approach of clipper ships, whose sails, from the top of the Hill, could be seen far out beyond the Golden Gate. When the signal went up that a ship was coming in the crowd started running, and by the time she arrived at Long's Wharf a clamoring mob would be yelling for mail, election returns from the East, or goods to buy. One time the night signal sounded in the midst of a theatrical performance and the prima donna from New York lost her entire audience.

As well as serving a utilitarian purpose, the old lookout station made a fine objective for Sunday excursion parties, for "there were . . . refreshing milk punches to be had in the room beneath the lookout on the roof." In those days, too, the view was considered "rewarding," a word still used sometimes by out-of-town visitors who drive up to the parking place beside the tower to look at the two big bridges.

Avoiding the time of day when tourists were prevalent, I used to like to climb the Filbert Street steps up toward the tower, meander up the sloping path bordered with yellow broom, and wander along the battlements at the foot of the tower and among the eucalyptus trees, which, because of someone's oversight, no doubt, have not been cut down. At night the place was always black and windy, deserted, the city a rosy glow in the evening fog. I felt like Hamlet and loved it.

When something really worth seeing is going on in the harbor, San Franciscans still gather at the top of the Hill to watch, as they have done since the earliest settlers first climbed its loamy slopes. When the big luxury liner *America*



was in port, the hilltop was crowded every day. The afternoon she was scheduled to leave I went up, edged through the crowd, and found a seat on the wide concrete rim bordering the parking space.

There was a gala excitement in the air. Little boys and girls played tag among the heather bushes; older people ate peanuts and laughed and admired the view. Chinese kites, green and red and yellow, flew high overhead in the crystal air, their strings guided sometimes by solemn Chinese children, sometimes by a young Hill couple, in blue jeans and plaid shirts. I looked with curiosity at the couples. They seemed like the kind of people who might be my friends, and yet no one I had known since the age of twelve had flown a kite. I didn't know that by the next spring I'd be very proud of my own butterfly kite and an adept at handling it.

It was exactly like being at the circus. When the red-stacked tugs came around from their berths to pull the *America* out, we turned automatically to our neighbors and said happily, "Here come the tugs!" just as we might have said, "Here come the clowns!" And when the ropes tying the mammoth ship to her dock were finally cast off, everyone, man, woman, child and chick, shouted, "There she goes!" and the little boys threw their caps into the air and cried, "Hooray!"

We watched until she was backed out into the channel and moved ahead toward the Gate under her own steam. Then we shouted again, and everyone stood up and waved and stamped his feet, and called, "Good-by . . . good-by!"

Hal, my actor friend, who had been away playing in a Carmel production of *Twelfth Night*, came back to town and decided that he too wanted to live on the Hill. I was

eager to help him look, for although I had been there two months I had not yet been inside any other Hill homes.

Being an actor and having only a minor job on a radio station, he wanted to hold the rent around \$25 a month, so we steered clear of the very modern white apartment houses, with their fountains in the lobby and chromium banisters.

When I first went to live on the Hill, old-timers (my relatives) told me dourly: "Nothing there now but modern stuff. All ruined. Nothing like the old days. All the old spirit gone." Well, maybe it isn't like the old days, but there's plenty left. In my house hunt with Hal I came across some of the insanest, most fantastic examples of makeshift and imaginative building I have ever seen. I thought I had explored the Hill thoroughly, but on this excursion I began to feel the first touches of *Alice in Wonderland* fever, a mild and pleasant malady which lasted throughout my two years in the West.

We started out one Sunday morning down a long flight of rickety wooden steps, flower gardens, and lawns in ascending terraces on either side. At the end, just before the stairs plunged grimly down to Sansome Street and the ice plants and warehouses which surround the base of the eastern side of the Hill, we turned to the left along a geranium-bordered brick alleyway. At the end was an old wooden house positively clinging by its fingernails to the side of the hill.

It was really very charming until something not so charming hit my nostrils.

"What in God's name is that?" I asked, recoiling.

Just then the faded blue front door opened and a woman in a batik smock with a red scarf tied over the wispy ends of her hair came out of the house. Under one arm she car-

ried a copy of *The Golden Bough*, and in the other a large Persian kitten. Seven other cats trailed at her sandaled heels and nestled against her legs, which wore bright green stockings.

"Shhhh," said Hal. "She likes cats."

Evidently. I would have known that without seeing them.

Yes, the lady said, she had a nice room for a gentleman. Just the place. The only thing she must ask was that he didn't throw matches out the window. She had had to ask the last young person to leave because he tossed paper matches over the balcony. Of course, it was a fifty-foot drop to the street below, but still it was a messy habit. She couldn't have that.

She took us around to the side of the house, and there was a little room tacked onto the house, propped up against the hill by several large rocks. We looked at them dubiously before stepping in.

"Oh, it's quite all right," she said. "I come around quite often and put rocks under. Keeps the house in place."

As she fumbled for a key, she confided: "You know, I do wish the people just above me on the hill would use rocks, too. Their house is really sliding quite badly, and every year I can hear their voices a little more distinctly. Five years ago I couldn't hear them at all, but now I can hear everything they say."

The room she showed us was about ten by twelve feet, its splintery wooden floor covered by shreds of grass mats. The furniture was of the wood and canvas outdoor variety and looked as if the landlady had fished it out of the bay. An open shower over a wooden tub took up one corner of the room, and there was a toilet of sorts out on the flimsy balcony. The view of the bay was, as usual, perfectly wonderful. And all for \$16 a month.

"Thank you very much," said Hal, "but I'm not sure it's quite what I wanted."

As we walked down the geranium alley I said, "Now, Hal, you know that could be charming if you just fixed it up a little."

"Quiet!" muttered Hal, taking a deep breath of fresh air.

Nothing else we looked at that day touched the house of the cat-loving eccentric. We wound our way through little back gardens, in one of which I was thrilled to see an apple tree in blossom, around hidden fountains, up and down flights of stairs, across nasturtium beds and corner lots strewn with beer cans . . . it was a very comprehensive view of the Hill.

We looked at Italian flats, on Montgomery and Union Streets, with their golden oak and immense laundry tubs. Hal wanted a fireplace and Italian flats don't have fireplaces. We passed up a tall gray building with ironwork balconies, although there was a "For Rent" sign outside.

"That's a pansy place," Hal said. "The guy rents it extra cheap if you're one of the boys. But you have to fix it up fancy. They say his own apartment is a foot deep in sand and has real palm trees growing in it."

"You mean everybody knows about his sex life?" I asked.

"Certainly," Hal said. "Haven't you heard about San Francisco?"

I hadn't, and I filed the question away in my "tentative information for future consideration" file.

At Spediacci's, the one grocery at the top of the Hill, we bought salami and white wine, and consumed both in the sun on my front steps. As we talked, people passed up and down the street, and Hal, who had lived on the Hill once before, hailed an occasional friend and called them to introduce me. They all immediately called me by my first



name and acted as if they had known me forever, and I was surprised and rather pleased. In the East I had long since passed the age when people called me Margaret the first time they met me; across the bay in Berkeley I was simply "Nan's friend" and at Aunt Flora's they never heard my name at all. Here, to this pale young man with bright blue eyes who said he lived in the next block, and to the girl in a flowered sun suit, carrying a bag of beer bottles, I was a friend of Hal's, I was their neighbor, and it might be a good idea if they called me Maggie. I had always hated that nickname. Now I liked it.

It's like a small town, I thought dreamily. Everyone seems to know everyone else . . . everyone friendly, and talking of being neighbors . . . wandering along the street in sun suits . . . how pleasant. . . .

I sat up suddenly. What, I thought, you, who grew up in the big town and teathed on Sinclair Lewis, you of all people, liking a small town.

But San Francisco isn't a small town, I argued.

Well, the part of Telegraph Hill you were just admiring, the way people behave and look—that's small town! And you're falling for it—I jeered at myself—you'll be learning to play bridge next!

No, I won't, I answered myself defiantly. And anyway, I don't care. At least I don't feel bull-in-the-china-shoppish up here!

"What are you muttering about bulls?" Hal asked, finishing the last drops of wine from the bottle.

"Nothing," I said, grinning at him. "I just feel swell . . . let's go look at that Irish place around the corner."

The Irish place around the corner was a five-room house, built by two middle-aged ladies just after the fire of 1906. They had owned a home farther down the hill which had

been consumed by the fire. When the fire started creeping up the hill and the water supply was cut off, the resourceful Italians had rolled out of their cellars the great barrels of homemade wine stored there, had wetted blankets in the wine and had spread the blankets on the walls of their homes and so saved them. The Irish ladies' home, having had no wine in its cellar, had gone up in flames. Almost all of it had been wrecked, anyway, by the earthquake.

In building their second home they made provisions for another earthquake, which they were sure would come. The walls were two feet thick and were put together with pegs instead of nails. For some reason which I've since forgotten, the ladies were convinced that a house built with pegs would never shake apart. They never had a chance to find out, and now, having become very elderly ladies indeed, they had decided to move to a warmer climate and to rent the house.

It was the sturdiest house I'd ever seen, and I urged Hal to rent it, just for the feeling of security it gave me. Besides, there was a large garden with fig trees and cacti, a pear tree, and a wild rose bush.

"And think of the beer parties you can give out here," I argued, falling into the swing of California reasoning.

He moved in a week later and with some of his friends from the radio station we spent the afternoon peeling off old wallpaper and calcimining the tremendous kitchen. It was not until late afternoon that we discovered there was no electricity in the place. We rushed around frantically, looking for plugs, wallboard sockets, or wires leading out to the street, and came back inevitably to the gas brackets on the black, paneled walls.

"My God," Hal groaned, "all the time I thought they were some kind of Irish candelabra!"

While we all laughed, Hal managed to get the jets lighted with only a few minor explosions along the way. As he dusted his hands he murmured, somewhat sourly, I thought, Wallace Irwin's poem about the early days of the Hill:

The Irish they live on the top av it,  
And th' Dagoes they live on th' base av it,  
And th' goats and th' chicks  
And th' brickbats and shticks  
Is joombled all over th' face av it!

Oh Telygraft Hill, Telygraft Hill,  
Crazy owld, daisy owld, Telygraft Hill!



THROUGH my thick skull gradually began to penetrate the idea that to find friends I didn't need to go out presenting letters of introduction to people I'd never heard of, I didn't need to look up my parents' old friends in the desperate hope I'd like the people they knew (and vice versa), I didn't need even to go off the Hill. All I had to do was to sit tight, and people would find their way to my door.

They were already beginning to—the boy with the pale face and the girl with the sun suit, the couple who lived next door, Hal's friends. They drifted in casually, so casually sometimes that I was startled. But I soon learned to leave my door open all day, as everyone else did, and to call out, if I was in the bathtub and heard footsteps in the living room: "Hello, whoever you are. I'll be out in a few minutes. Help yourself to the wine in the jug by the fireplace."

I didn't know why they came except that they were friendly and I was new on the Hill and, being an Easterner, was something of a curiosity. Sometimes I thought they came around just to ask me, "How do you like living in San Francisco?" They never tired of the question, even though I sometimes tired of answering it. Dad had warned me that San Franciscans were the touchiest people in the world about their city and that above all things they resented New Yorkers who put on the dog. So I was careful

never to say anything—buildings, newspapers, climate, *anything*—was inferior to the New York product. Once I slipped and in a forgetful moment said something about the sensationalism of San Francisco papers, where every head on the front page ended in an exclamation mark.

“The *Chronicle* is just as good as the *New York Herald Tribune*!” I was told indignantly by one of its reporters.

They were a haphazard bunch and their occupations were widely differentiated. One boy, who lived pantheistically under a grapevine on a sun porch, was a messenger for some business house and used to toot up and down the Hill on his little yellow motorcycle, which he kept well stocked with gin and Scotch. Another worked in the Farm Security Administration, played the piano like Paderewski, and was writing a novel about the early Mayans. The girl in the sun suit was a secretary. A ruddy-cheeked woman with slick black hair was a ceramist and turned out thousands of rather distressing Spanish dancing girls with big holes in their bellies, for the Eastern florist trade.

It was not at all like New York, where social groups seem to arise out of a common occupation. Here no one seemed to care how anyone else earned his living. They never talked about their jobs, and their opinions did not seem to be conditioned by them. I was accustomed to the Eastern habit of sizing people up by their careers—the first question asked in New York about a new person was always, “What does he do?” Here, to my amazement, I found the question usually greeted by a look of bewilderment and the light answer, “Oh, he works downtown, or something. . . .”

The essential question seemed to be not, “What does he do?” but “What kind of person is he?” As I thought it over, it seemed far more sensible.

As spring came on and more people began dropping in, I developed an urge to pretty up the shack. I had vowed not to spend any money on furniture, but at least I could paint. So I wandered down the Hill to an Italian paint shop, and bought gallons of blue, red, and yellow enamel, which I proceeded to splash on everything within range. The chairs blossomed in the color of daffodils; the door to the kitchen became a violent Balkan blue. Red trimming, I fondly thought, gave a peasant air to the ensemble. In between the frenzied splashings I would take time off in the silly little garden to play my recorder—a wooden flute with a peculiarly pastoral note which you're either crazy about or you hate. Fortunately, most of my neighbors seemed to like it.

One day, in paint-splashed blue overalls, tennis shoes with holes in the toes, and a spot of red paint on the end of my nose, which I could see by squinting with one eye closed, I was digging rather intensely in the garden when a knock sounded on my front door.

"Damn," I said, trailing mud across the Chinese mats and brushing my hair out of my eyes as I went to open the door.

It opened on the handsomest six feet of manhood I had ever seen in my life. Dressed impeccably in brown tweeds and a snowy polo shirt, his brown eyes crinkled with laughter when he looked at me. As susceptible as any female to broad shoulders and blond curly hair, I cringed and felt like saying immediately, "Go away until I get into my silver lamé—then we can start over again."

Instead, I managed to gulp, and say, "Hello . . . ?" in as dignified a manner as I could manage. Surreptitiously I tried to scratch the red paint off my nose.

He actually looked shy as he stepped in and looked

around. Maybe, I thought to myself, this vision isn't a salesman. Maybe he isn't looking for an apartment.

"I'm Pete Stuart," he said. "I live right around the corner, and I've been hearing your recorder every afternoon. . . . It sounded nice, and I liked the songs you played . . . so I traced the sound to your garden. . . . I play one, too, you see."

Only then I noticed that in one big fist he was clutching a little soprano recorder.

It turned out that Pete was supposed to have gone to a cocktail party that someone had given for me a month before and had never shown up. His father knew my relatives, or something like that. It was all very complicated, but it made everything quite correct, he said, as he *would* have met me if he had come to the cocktail party.

Looking like a little boy who had spilled his milk, he explained why he had missed the party.

"I got drunk," he said.

By this time I was far gone in folly. I thought his explanation charmingly forthright.

We sat out in the garden on Chinese stools and tried to play duets on the recorders. He wasn't very good, and his big fingers kept slipping onto the wrong holes. He gave it up, laughing.

"I've never played it very much," he said. "I just thought it would make a good introduction."

He didn't talk about himself very much—just enough so that I got the outlines. He lived around the corner with his father and brother. His father had just been divorced, and he and the two boys had come up to San Francisco from Carmel, where Pete had grown up. His father was a sociologist . . . his father was the most marvelous person in the world. His brother was a good guy. I must meet them.



"As a matter of fact," he said, "we're having a kind of party tonight . . . maybe you'd like to come."

I thought quickly. I was supposed to go to the opera with Aunt Flora. The hell with that. Did I have a decent dress? Yes. Well, O.K., then!

"I'd love to," I said prettily.

Going out through the living room he stopped in front of my bookshelf and silently glanced through several books which had just been sent on from the East.

"Do you know John Powys' *Wolf Solent*?" he asked.

The boy can read, too, I thought. There must be something wrong. He probably has no sense of humor, or has gallstones or something.

"I haven't read it," I answered absently, contemplating the pleasant way the cap of yellow hair fitted into the sturdy tanned neck.

After he had gone, I raked myself over the coals.

"Anyone would think you were sixteen years old again!" I scolded furiously, shampooing my hair and setting waves in the most beguiling way I could think of.

"You've never liked the big bruiser type," I reminded myself grimly as I stroked on a new shade of nail polish I had been saving for my birthday.

"What has California done to you?" I asked in amazement, as I ironed a clean slip vigorously. But in the back of my mind I was thanking my stars my only Spring print dress had just come back from the cleaners.

By the time I was ready for the party, groomed to the eyebrows and wafting along on waves of Chanel No. 5, I was telling myself that some pernicious influence in the California air had temporarily weakened me, that I was a big girl now and certainly knew better than to go all feminine at the sight of a two-foot shoulder spread. I would

ignore this Pete character all evening, I decided. I would concentrate on his brother or maybe even his father. I would show California where it got off. It was all very well to be looking for friends, for a group, for pleasant companionship. But I'd had enough of the tender emotion in the East. . . . I was on a sabbatical from love, and I didn't propose to let any California glamour boy upset my plans.

By this time I was actually angry at Pete Stuart, whom I'd never heard of a few hours before. I rounded the corner into Montgomery Street in a high dudgeon, looking, I hoped, my dazzling best, and wearing, I thought, an emotional armor of stainless steel.

Down the Montgomery Street steps . . . around another corner, then up four flights of one of the golden oak Italian apartment houses. The Stuart apartment seemed to be a kind of penthouse effect on the roof. The living room was almost bare . . . a mattress on the carpetless floor, with an India print over it, one chair under a reading light, a phonograph, and some of George Bellows' paintings, clipped from *Life*, pinned to the walls. They must have cleared it out for dancing, I thought, not knowing then that the lack of furniture was the Stuarts' masculine idea of simplifying life.

The room shimmered with people. Pete detached himself from a knot around the phonograph, and took my left hand in his, to introduce me around.

"Uh, uh!" I thought warily, suddenly aware of a goatish gleam in the depths of his dark eyes. I removed my hand gratefully to take the gin and tonic someone was thrusting at me.

Pete's brother Charles turned out to be a square-jawed sturdy guy, with green eyes behind glasses and an air of

exuberant abandon which contrasted strangely with Pete's decorous restraint. He was already quite tight and he had his arm around a small blond girl in brown velvet, who looked as if she had given up trying to escape. He was encouraging her to do a hornpipe with him, without much success.

Over by the window was a tall boy with a mat of kinky brown hair and a face like a rather endearing squirrel's. He wore a soldier's uniform, and he was plucking at his one stripe and quoting disconsolately from Saroyan: "No foundation, no foundation all the way down the line."

"That's Joe," Pete told me. "He's a Prussian baron. No kidding. Third generation inherited title, I think. He's just gone into the army, and he isn't very well adjusted yet."

Evidently not.

Sitting cross-legged on the mattress against the wall was a stolid-faced citizen, who looked as if he was practicing yoga.

"He's an Indian chief," they told me. "Joe found him out in the street and brought him along. He hasn't said anything yet, but Leanore's working on him."

Leanore, a pretty girl whom I could have spotted as a debutante at seventy paces, knelt beside the chief and was chattering in the peculiarly brookish way debutantes chatter. I noticed there was a desperate gleam in her eye and that she'd twisted her handkerchief practically into a hangman's noose.

"Where's your father?" I asked Pete.

"Oh, he's in bed with Taine's *History of English Literature*," he said. "He's in the little room beyond the bathroom, so don't talk out loud to yourself when you go in there."

I was grateful for the warning.



Dinner was a mad affair, around the table in the big, brightly lighted kitchen. Charles had cooked the meat loaf and swore that he had started at noon and basted it every half-hour all day. Pete had made the salad dressing and confessed gently that he had dropped in just a touch of gin to make it interesting. It was.

It was all very warm and bright and confusing. Everybody screamed and told long stories which no one listened to and kept jumping up to fill the glasses with more and more red wine. In the middle of dinner the chief decided that we needed some flowers for the center of the table. He wouldn't finish his dinner until he had secured a rope from the little laundry next to the kitchen and lassoed a pot of geraniums from the terrace fifteen feet below the kitchen window.

And underneath the excitement and noise I was conscious of Pete across the table from me, not eating or drinking very much, just sitting there and smiling. I turned hurriedly to Charles on my right and concentrated.

It was no use though. I was already a dead pigeon. After dinner we straggled back into the living room and someone put "Adios Marquita Linda" on the phonograph. Pete held out his arms and we danced. It was perfect. "The lad can dance, too," I told myself feebly, trying to be humorous about the whole thing. But I didn't feel funny—just dazed.

I don't know how long we danced, but I remember feeling like the girl in one of those movies of a couple on a dance floor, when they fade out all the other couples, and show the hero and heroine whirling alone on a carpet of clouds.

The music stopped, and then the inevitable question, which I had been expecting for half an hour, was mur-

mured: "Would you like to go look at the view from the roof garden?"

The city lay below us in a moonlit pattern of blacks and pale blue. The stretching span of the Bay Bridge was outlined in amber lights on our right, and under it moved the black silhouette of a freighter, the glow from her portholes falling in shimmering ribbons across the silky waters. In silence we watched until she disappeared beyond the ferry building.

The night wind from the sea blew over the dark rooftop and ruffled the white carnations growing in big pots around the railing. Pete leaned down, picked one, and slowly fixed it over my right ear.

"You wear it on that side when you've got a man," he said.

IT WAS fun to be wearing flowers over the right ear. The game of hearts and flowers is fun anywhere, I guess, but in San Francisco it's ecstatic—especially in the spring. Hearts drift a rosy glow over the city, and California itself takes care of the flowers, enough for fifteen hundred damsels' crowns, and more besides.

Perhaps they didn't really all come together, but in my memory of that spring all the flowers of California blossomed at once. On every street corner in the downtown section the outdoor flower stands, so familiar to tourists, rioted with enormous gardenias, bunches of roses and daffodils. Lupin swung its blue tendrils over every vacant lot, and across the bay (where we drove on week ends) the hills were purple with lupin and violets. Acacia trees swarmed with round yellow blossoms, puffy as baby canaries, and scarlet blossoms waved their soft angora petals from eucalyptus trees. In Golden Gate Park rhododendrons bloomed by the thousands, and the blossoms of fruit trees sparkled over the park's thousand acres of hills and meadows.

Like all San Franciscans, we spent a lot of time in the park. With our lunch in knapsacks (leftovers from Pete's camping days) we would take the street car out to Stanyan Street and rent bicycles for the day. A day wouldn't give us enough time to see Golden Gate Park—it was too enormous, too full of fascinations—but we had many days, we

thought. Buffalo paddocks, herds of deer and elk, fuchsia gardens, a football stadium, canyons, brooks, lakes, museums—there was no end to it.

There are no “keep off the grass” signs in Golden Gate Park, and Pete and I used to eat picnic lunches in wilderness groves that might have been in the heart of Australia.

“To think that fifty years ago this was all sand dunes,” Pete said one day. I looked at the waterfall dropping at our feet, the thick ferns and blackberry bushes, the towering oaks and cypresses above us. A blackbird chattered and across a patch of sunlight a tiny fox slipped into shadow.

“I don’t believe you!” I said. Pete reached for another hard-boiled egg.

“Used to be called the white elephant of San Francisco, back in 1870. Nothing here but dunes, and the sea wind blew sand over everything they tried to plant. People said it took four posts to keep a blade of grass from blowing away.”

“But—what happened?”

“A young Scot gardener named John McLaren—they call him ‘Uncle John’ now—came along in 1887 and said he thought he could turn the place into a park. Nobody believed him but they let him try. He brought in some beach grass that no one had ever used before. It sends out roots so fast the sand can’t cover it. And then he planted a kind of tea tree that holds the soil and an Australian acacia that’s a soil builder. So he got rid of the sand and he brought in trees from all over the world, and thousands of varieties of flowers, and he thought of all the different things people could do in a park—and there you are.”

“Is he still alive?”

“Yes,” Pete said, lighting a cigarette, “they made him park superintendent for life, and if you look around long enough

you'll find him somewhere in the park, raising hell because someone stepped on a petunia. He's just started to plant his second million trees—and he's ninety-four."

"Pete, how on earth do you know all this?"

"Oh, everybody in San Francisco knows about Uncle John. Great guy, he is."

Like most Californians I met, Pete didn't have much respect for anyone over forty, and I was impressed as much by his attitude as by the story of Uncle John. When John McLaren died in January, 1943, I learned that Pete wasn't kidding about San Francisco's veneration for their aged park superintendent. And I understood why.

Bicycling back toward Stanyan Street, we would stop for tea at the Japanese Tea Garden, a holdover from the Midwinter Fair of 1894 and a holdover in my memory from my own childhood. Vividly I recalled scampering up and down over the moon bridge, crossing a tiny stream where water lilies blossomed. Now it was more fun to look at the bridge, seated at a rustic table beneath a flowering cherry tree. With tea the exquisite little ladies in flowered kimonos brought a curiously twisted cookie which held your printed fortune within its paper-thin shells. The fortunes always seemed out of keeping with the setting: "Hard work leads to a blonde's love," or "You will marry a freckled boy on a sunny Thursday."

Of Pete's many attractions, one of the most convenient was his car. It was really his father's car, but I didn't discover that until the day when his father left a note for the boys saying he was going to Nevada to get married and took the car with him.

Until that surprising day, however, the car was a pleasant accompaniment to our San Francisco life, in spite of the

fact that Pete drove like a madman—that is to say, like most California men. Coming home from picnics in Marin County across the bay, I would cling to the door handle, praying and cursing, while Pete wove the car in and out the sharp bends in the cliff road above the sea, at seventy miles an hour. Slowing down slightly to negotiate the narrow outside strip of road around a slide in the cliff, he would shout tenderly: "I'm not scaring you, am I?"

Eventually I discovered that everyone drove that way in the West, and that somehow most of them managed to stay alive. So I grew used to it, even though I couldn't break myself of a sedate Eastern snail's pace when I was at the wheel.

In any event, driving a strange car in a new city is always an unnerving experience—if you aren't getting snarled in inexplicable gear shifts then you're snarling up traffic in general on the city's busiest intersections. It took me awhile to get used to the San Francisco traffic signals—they didn't flash red and green lights, like civilized signals, but instead they gave off with an ear-splitting clang and an arm marked "Go" or "Stop" popped out of what looked like a yellow hitching post. Another disconcerting feature was Market Street (the main drag) where the municipally owned five-cent trolleys and the corporation-owned seven-centers were fighting it out side by side. With four tracks down the street (coming and going, naturally) and a series of murderous steel buttons which fenced off pedestrian islands, the private car practically had to travel with two wheels on the sidewalk, or so it seemed to a disconcerted stranger. San Francisco policemen, however, are the politest men in the world.

One day I borrowed the car and navigated my way along Market Street, out Parnassus Avenue, and turned up the

curving drive that led to Englewood Avenue. It was so steep that in the days of our first car Dad had to back it all the way up the hill because the gasoline couldn't flow high enough to keep the motor running. Without too much difficulty I parked the car in front of the brown-shingled house where we had lived when I was four years old. At that time this section was almost in the country, and Mother and Dad thought that the air would be good for a growing child, but within a year they were driven back to the more congenial surroundings of Russian Hill by the heavy atmosphere of suburbia. I had vague and pleasant memories of the house, though, and I was pleased to see that yellow tea roses still clambered to the roof and that tiny white daisies with strawberry-pink centers still spotted the green lawn. But the porch was gone—the front porch where I used to hide from passing policemen because I thought they'd arrest me for running around barelegged.

My most vivid memories of that period were all tied up with Wolfgang, a hulking German physicist who haunted my parents for almost a year and nearly drove them crazy. He once stalked into the kitchen while Mother was preparing dinner and angrily turned the gas down under the potatoes.

"You employ too much energy for de production of de result!" he snapped. Glaring at the low kitchen sink, he embarked on a tirade of American inefficiency.

"Vy don't de American fools understand dat a voman does not need to use her back muscles but only de arm muscles for vashing de dishes?" he stormed. "Vy do day make de sink so low?"

"I didn't design it," Mother said.

"Dat's it! Dat's it! De damn fool Americans don't know nuttings about science."

Mother once said that he was the only foreigner she ever met who made her want to ask that stupid question: "Why don't you go back where you came from?"

He was a brilliant man though, and never more so than the evening he explained Einstein to Dad. For three hours he covered countless sheets of paper with equations and cabalistic symbols. Working furiously, he would stop every now and then to say:

"So dis hypothesis naturally leads to de equation—you follow me, Lam?"

"Sure, Wolfgang, naturally," Dad would reply, long since lost in the quagmire but not wanting to irritate Wolfgang.

Wolfgang wound up with a flourish of X's and square roots and infinity signs.

"Dere!" he exclaimed, "now you see vy der muss be relativity!"

"Sure, Wolfgang, I see it now."

Wolfgang looked at Dad with cold blue fishy eyes.

"Vell, if you understand so goddamn much you explain it back to me den."

Wolfgang was writing a novel, and one night he condescended to outline the plot to Mother and Dad.

"De heroine iss a beautiful nursemaid named Lisa, wid a liddle face embetted in golden curls. Vun evening she iss veeling de perambulator along de sea by de Cliff House ven she looks up and sees dat Wenus iss nod in her accustomed place in de sky. Qvickly she vips out her hatpin and uses it to make a calculation. Estimating de ellipse of Wenus and de ellipse of Mars, and taking into account de astronomical theory of time-space, she arrives at de correct con-



clusion dat Wenus will smash into de eart' at 9:26 A.M. on September 25, 1928. So. . . ."

"Wolfgang," Dad interrupted, "how in God's name could a little nursemaid know all that stuff?"

"She was a *German* nursemaid!" Wolfgang roared.

My own brush with Wolfgang came one evening when I trotted in from play and asked Mother what made the stars twinkle. Slouched in the room's most comfortable chair, Wolfgang turned his head to listen to her answer.

"Why, darling," Mother said, "the stars are winking at you. That's why they twinkle." Wolfgang sprang to his feet.

"Vy don't you tell de child de trut'!"

He sat down again and beckoned to me, and reluctantly I stood before him.

"Dis is de vay it is, child," he said. "De molecular vibrations penetrating de different atmospheric densities causes a breaking down of de refractions of de rays. . . ."

We didn't get rid of Wolfgang until we moved East.

My life was not entirely one of sentimental journeys into the past and healthy outdoor excursions. San Francisco has more bars per capita than any other city in the country, and Pete seemed to think I should visit them all. San Francisco has always been a city where people dined and drank a lot outside the home, and the tradition hasn't changed. I wasn't surprised at this when I discovered that each joint has its own peculiar flavor, sharply differing from others in décor, habitués, and spontaneous entertainment.

At the Iron Pot, where the paintings of Hill artists were given free display and sometimes raffled off for a drink, a young man sat at the bar, bent in absorption over a book. Outside the Pot a red truck drew up, and its hefty driver

swung through the doors and over to the bar. He slapped the young man on the back.

"Whatcha readin', pal?" he inquired.

"*Alice in Wonderland*," the young man replied politely.

"Gee, pal, dat's a great book!"

The truck driver picked up his beer, leaned over the young man's shoulder, and silently the two went on reading.

At the Black Cat a bleary old reprobate used to come in at midnight and, when someone volunteered to bang out a tune on the tinny piano in the corner, would do a little shuffling Charleston between the tables. He was drunken, unshaven, pathetic, but he cleaned up on quarters and half-dollars, and he claimed he was the happiest man in the world.

And once, also at the Black Cat, the proprietor opened up some boxes which had been left behind by a traveling salesman and discovered that one was full of hats, the other of hula skirts. He handed them out evenly to all the women in the place, and I acquired a coy red beret and a rustling grass skirt.

In our saloon sightseeing around Telegraph Hill we were buoyed for a while by a worthy cause. Dorothy Erskine, a family friend across the Hill, with a social conscience and the energy to back it up, was agitating for a housing project down near the waterfront and asked us to get some petitions signed.

"A very simple matter," said Pete.

After a year in San Francisco he was at ease with the familiars of all the bars. At Tony Nicco's, where the Hill's young radicals sang "*Bandiera Rossa*" while Giacomo Patri played his guitar, they filled a petition sheet in five minutes. At Izzy Gomez', even the Countess, a blond and languid fixture at the gloomy bar, welcomed Pete with rapture and

wanted to sign five aliases. At the Ricksha, our favorite bar in Chinatown, Pete discovered that he had gone to school with Willy Chen, the Chinese bartender, and Willy got his whole family to sign up. Pete was wonderful.

"I don't give a damn about housing projects," he confided, "but this is sort of fun."

It was, and so were the whirling trips through the night spots.

Of them all, I liked the Ricksha best—perhaps because of its dual personality. Hidden away on a dark alley in Chinatown, it used to be an art museum. When the owners decided that art didn't pay, they simply installed a bar, and left the art. Drinking gin and tonic (a San Francisco fad at the time) I gazed upon an ancient jade Kwan Yin, indirectly lighted within her glass niche. Dancing to the juke box "Hut Sut Song," we whirled between cases of Sung bowls and carved golden dragons.

The only drawback to the Ricksha was the fact that in the summer time it was one of the stops on the sightseeing tours. Every hour a bus would draw up at the end of the alley and belch a bunch of tourists into our quiet retreat. In a long line the ladies from Kansas and the gentlemen from Iowa would trail after the bored Chinese guide. They listened silently to the short lecture on Chinese art ". . . This bowl from the T'ang period is really a petrified grapefruit rind, glazed with . . ." but their eyes were upon us lost souls at the bar, and the looks they gave the girls indicated that they thought we were right out of the Barbary Coast. Poor things, unless they went on another sightseeing tour, how were they to know the Barbary Coast had been turned into a respectable street of honky-tonk sucker joints?

Forsaking the bars and the car for one evening, Pete and Charles and I went on a melancholy excursion—the last trip of the ferry boat across the bay from San Francisco to Sausalito. Earlier in the evening, a party had been held by the commuters (who hereafter would travel by bus across the Golden Gate Bridge), and the old decks were littered with dirty pink confetti and varicolored streamers. But now the ferry was dark and almost deserted, and it slipped silently into its berth in Sausalito.

We had a little time before the return trip, and we walked along the waterfront of the hillside town to the old bar where Jack London used to hang out, Dad said that Jack London had taught him the song “Nobody loves me, everybody hates me, guess I’ll go out and eat worms . . .” and I could easily picture them singing it in this dimly lighted barn, with its population of water-front derelicts.

But I was cheered when I looked across the little harbor, where sailboats bobbed at anchor, up to the lights of the hillside where Freddie O’Brien used to live. Freddie cleaned up on his book, *White Shadows in the South Seas*, and he lived his life out in comparative peace in a little house clinging to the side of the hill a few hundred feet above the harbor. A gay and explosive Irishman, he used to tell wonderful stories, but the only one I remembered was the one about his neighbor’s parrot.

The bird belonged to a Christian Scientist who lived in the house just above Freddie, and it often fluttered down to Freddie’s porch to sit in the sun and ask for crackers. On this ill-fated day, however, the parrot kept on going, and Freddie saw it disappear through the trees in a generally beachward direction. In a few minutes Freddie heard a dreadful commotion on the beach—squawking and screeching and general bedlam. He rushed down the trail, broke

through the bushes to the beach, and a horrible sight met his eyes!

"There was that poor parrot," he used to describe it, "being pecked to pieces by a crowd of jealous gulls. And, believe it or not, his green feathers covered the face of the sun."

Freddie chased the gulls away, and the denuded parrot hobbled toward him, shivering.

"God is love, God is love," it croaked bravely.

FOR weeks before we went to Carmel for the first time Pete prepared me for the frightening encounter with his mother. I have brushed with many a lad's mother but Carol Stuart sounded unique.

"She tried to kill me several times," Pete said softly, his brown eyes sad as he leaned forward from the hassock by the fireplace in an attitude of apologetic explanation.

"Oh, Pete, no!"

He didn't seem to hear me, and with quiet melancholy poured ale into a green glass while he went on talking about his mother.

"She came out on the porch once with a gun in her hand," he said. "She pointed it at me and pulled the trigger. How was I to know it wasn't loaded?"

"But, Pete—"

"And once she chased me all over the house and garden with a pitchfork," he continued imperturbably. "I had to lock myself in the bathroom and stay there all day until Father came home."

I asked him what he had done to make his mother so angry.

"Nothing," he answered, "nothing at all. For some reason, which I have since forgotten, I had concealed an egg in the pocket of my new suit. She came by and smacked me on the hips, and of course the egg broke, and after that, one

thing led to another. When I put the egg in my pocket, how was I to know she was going to hit me?"

Pete, I had already discovered, was a master of rationalization. I looked at him suspiciously, but his face was bland, his eyes innocent. Maybe he was exaggerating but he couldn't be making all this up out of nothing. A lump came to my throat when I thought of the poor boy, driven from his home by a maniacal mother.

"Your father must have had a hard time, too," I said, sympathetically. Pete sighed.

"Oh, yes," he said, "it was terrible. Mother would stride up and down the bedroom, night after night, raging at him. 'You don't love me!' she'd shriek, and Father would just lie there in bed, reading Proust, turning one page after another and not paying any attention at all. And when she threw something at him, he'd just duck and go on reading Proust."

It occurred to me for a fleeting moment that I too would probably rage at a man who read Proust in bed when I wanted to talk, but Pete looked so distressed and, at the moment, so unlike a man who would *ever* read Proust in bed, that I forgot my momentary sympathy for Carol Stuart.

Pete dropped the subject then and let me stew for several days. Bicycling one afternoon along the Embarcadero, we stopped for clam chowder in a little sea-food bar, and suddenly he began on his mother again.

"Regularly every evening at eight-thirty we'd have to go out and cut Mother down from the oak tree," he began. "At eight o'clock there was always a rousing argument, at eight-twenty she'd march through the house with the length of rope in her hands, and ten minutes later we'd go out and cut her down. Usually she hadn't even bothered to jump, because she knew one of us would be coming along for her. We used to take turns getting her, and the whole thing was

very boring. . . . I think I'll have some oysters too, and a bottle of ale."

His cavernous male stomach satisfied, he lighted a cigarette and continued his childhood reminiscences.

"One time my sister Ursula was asleep when Mother came rushing into her room. It was a cold night, but Mother stripped the covers from Ursula with a fling of her arm. 'Get up, Ursula!' she shouted, 'damn you, get up and tell me you love me!'"

Patching together Pete's descriptions, I built up a mental picture of Carol Stuart which had me shivering in the long nights. Lying on my bumpy cot, alone with the darkness and the reverberating echoes of the foghorns on the bay, I would tremble when I pictured the woman who had, incomprehensibly, given birth to my gentle Pete.

She always wore crimson, he said. She looked like a haggard witch. She was brutally frank, to your face and behind your back. She specialized in feuds. All her friends were homos and dilettantes.

"Worst of all," Pete had said gloomily, "she'll lure you away from me. Of course, there's never *really* been any girl before you, but the one or two I've brought to the house years ago she made friends with, and then she wormed all their secrets out of them and told them a lot of lies about me, and everything was all over after that."

Inevitably, the day when we were to drive to Carmel for the week end rose up out of the calendar and became appalling reality. As Anne Boleyn dressed for the headsman's block so did I dress for the meeting with Pete's mother. I did not wear crimson. On the drive down the Coast, along the straight highway edged with eucalyptus, through the hills of jagged rock where the bandit Joaquin Murieta used to hide, across the sun-baked fields of artichokes and into



the Monterey fog belt I tried to fight panic with my excitement of seeing Carmel again. Panic won.

The rambling house where Carol Stuart lived with her two younger children was approached by a sandy path, which led in from the road through a thicket of live oaks to a flagged courtyard, circled with hanging baskets of purple and pink fuchsia. As we walked down the path we could hear laughter, screams, oaths, and a general roar of pandemonium. The deep barking of a dog served as a background.

A tangled heap of legs and flashing colors almost knocked us over as we stepped down into the courtyard. Over by the door a dark-eyed young girl in a blue dirndl clasped a howling five-year-old girl with one hand and a police dog with the other, evidently restraining them from joining the melee. She tossed a fall of curls from her eyes, then looked up and winked at me.

"This is the family," Pete said.

The heap of legs and arms abruptly stopped whirling, and separated into mother and son. Ten-year-old Brian, his face rosy and his hair tousled, squealed with joy at the sight of Pete and ran to hug him. Carol Stuart stayed where she was, her legs straight out, her hands pushing on the stones behind her to support her as she looked up at us.

"My God, Pete," she said, "you're getting fat."

She stood up then and nonchalantly brushed the dust off her rear. A wiry woman with a lithe body, she wore blue jeans with a Mexican silver belt, scarlet sandals, and a scarlet shirt. Electric brown hair fell now over glittering dark eyes, and her derisively curved lips were brilliant with lipstick. I remembered Pete's phrase "haggard beauty," discarded the haggard and retained the beauty.

She was sizing me up too, and I quivered under the scrutiny. She saw my embarrassment and cut it short.

"So you're the girl we've been hearing about," she said and smiled. "You look too nice for Pete."

With a glowering Pete leading the way with the suitcases, Mrs. Stuart clutching my arm, the children following, and the barking dog bringing up the rear, we progressed to the house, looking, I imagined, much like the procession in *Peter and the Wolf*. Only who was the duck and who the wolf?

Books lined the walls of the living room, and a chased silver urn filled with moss roses stood on an old spinet in the corner. An enormous Gauguin print hung above the fireplace, and orange window curtains picked up the oranges of its Tahitian sunset. Everywhere, on the long refectory table, the carved desk, the mantelpiece, rested great curled shells, their polished inner surfaces faintly pink, glowing in the filtered green light. Three Siamese cats curled in a warm tangle on the deep corduroy couch in front of the fireplace. Mrs. Stuart rushed over to them and scooped them up into her arms, biting delicately at their pointed ears.

"Oooo . . ." she crooned, "you beautiful animals!"

One of the cats, squeezed upside down, yowled suddenly and scratched Mrs. Stuart on a bony wrist. Abruptly she dropped them and, ignoring their protests as they hit the floor upside down, fished a crumpled cigarette out of her pants pocket and lighted it with a miniature pistol lighter from the coffee table. It was the first one that I had ever seen that actually worked.

"Damned dirty little beasts," she muttered.

Dragging Pete with her, she disappeared into the kitchen to get some beer. The door swung shut behind them, and

the children and I were left in silence. Stella, the curly-headed four-year-old, stared at me with a forefinger in her mouth, her fat little baby stomach popping out above her sturdy legs.

"What was all that ruckus outside?" I asked Brian curiously.

Brian grinned. "Oh, Mother and I were just wrestling," he said. His gray eyes turned serious as he explained. "You see," he said, "Mother is very high-strung and has a lot of energy. If we want to keep her in a good mood we have to see that she has her daily exercise."

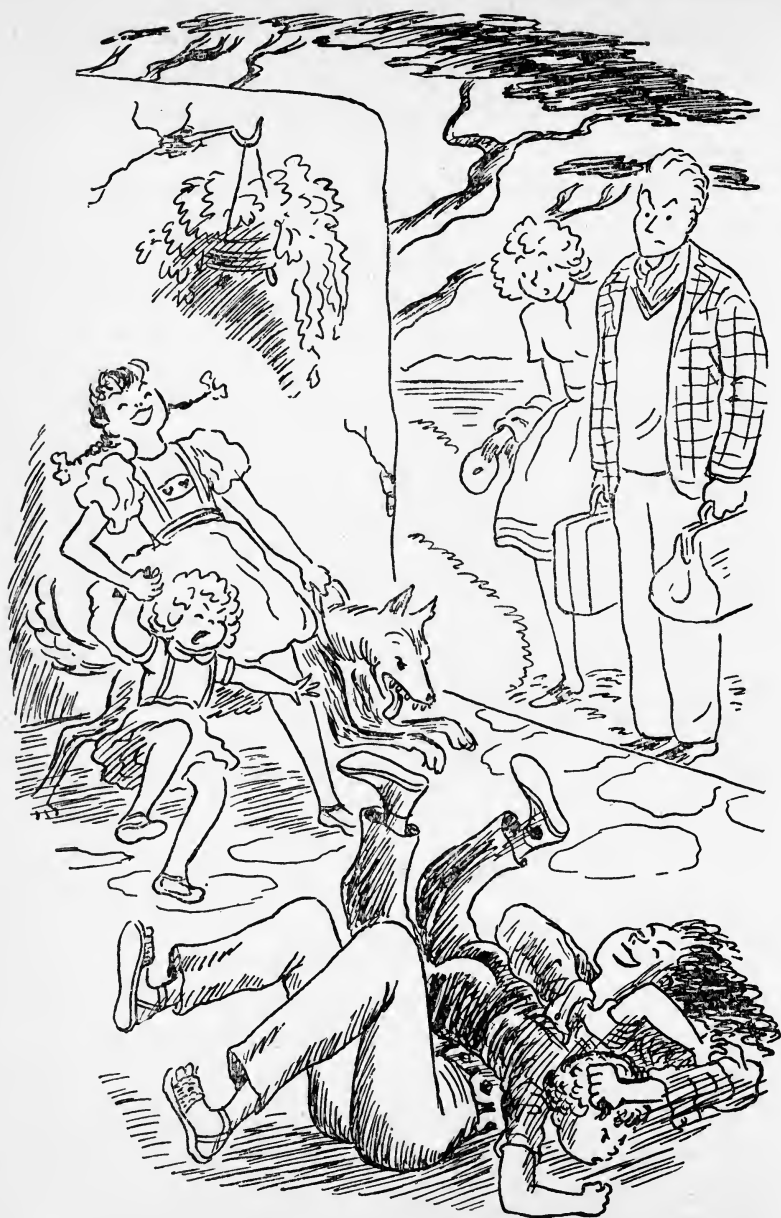
"Brian!" Ursula exclaimed in pretty horror. With a flounce of her skirts she bounced up from the couch and, tweaking Brian's nose as she passed him, went over to the phonograph in the corner. While mischief rippled over her young face, she searched the stack of records and wriggled with satisfaction when she found the one she wanted. It was Marlene Dietrich singing the sensual German song "Peter."

She kicked off her shoes and with unself-conscious concentration began a series of pirouettes and whirls in rhythm with the music, stopping to giggle every time Marlene chanted "Paehter."

"*Paehter, Paehter, komm' zu mir zurück . . .*" (twirl, bow, dip). "*Paehter, Paehter . . .*" (convulsive giggles as she looked at me). "*Du wärst mein bestes stück . . .*" (leap, slide, whirl). "*Paehter, Paehter, Ich war so gemein . . .*" (teasing laughter). "*Paehter, Paehter, wie sieht man alles ein?*" (graceful curtsy).

In the silence that filled the room for a moment after the music stopped, I heard Mrs. Stuart screaming at Pete in the kitchen.

"Damn you, Pete," she shouted, "you look just like the



cat that's eaten the canary!" Pete's answer was only a low and bitter murmur.

Young Brian, with grave tact, came to the rescue. "Would you like to smell something yummy?" he asked.

"Of course I would."

He went over to the spinet and with his small square hands carefully grasped the heavy silver urn of moss roses and brought them over to me. Stella trotted close at his heels. I sniffed appreciatively.

"Isn't that keen?"

It was, and so was he. Until then my favorite small boy had been the redheaded son of an Eastern poet who had once told the family mongrel, beaten and bloody from a neighborhood dogfight: "Poor Tom, you do lead a poet's life!" But Brian, with his courtesy and his humor, his self-possession and his love of smells, tangled himself forever in my heart that afternoon.

With a rush of instructions shouted over her shoulder, Mrs. Stuart came pounding into the room, Pete trailing behind her with the beer. She sat down beside me on the couch and curled her legs up under her. Her conversation was dizzying.

"Everything's a mess in this house I'm positively exhausted giving my all to Russian Relief and no help no help at all I don't know how I stand it—Brian, put the roses back on the piano darling—I know your Aunt Sara she's very lovely so are you what's your mother like? Is she at all like you I bet she's cute too—Ursula turn that damned machine off and come sit down Ursula's going to be a dancer she has nice legs hasn't she but so have I, you have too I do think legs are an advantage don't you, Pete? Stella, stop pulling the cat's tail, darling. Give me a cigarette somebody, why these boys always come down here and expect the house to

be stocked with liquor and cigarettes I can't imagine and talking of legs, teeth are important too they say teeth spaced wide apart means you're passionate yours are close together but perhaps it doesn't mean anything—somebody put those damned cats out they're driving me wild, and oh Pete, Jean was here today and she was positively stinking drunk and God knows why she lets her hair hang in her mouth that way, what did you ever see in her? Pete, take the children and go get some more beer I want to talk to Margaret!"

Almost thankfully Pete and the children departed, while I cursed them mentally for leaving me alone with this cyclone. But to my surprise Mrs. Stuart was silent. I looked at her, curled up in a corner of the couch with her shoulders drooping, and I thought suddenly of Doña Rita, Conrad's tempestuous heroine in *The Arrow of Gold*. Rita, too, had sat cross-legged like an idol among her cushions, the cigarette box sometimes flying up and scattering cigarettes on the floor when the conversation grew animated, a great brass bowl at her elbow. Carol Stuart needed only the golden arrow with the jeweled shaft pinned in her dark hair to make the illusion complete. Was she, too, "varied in her simplicity"?

She looked at me in silence, and suddenly her face became that of a small child who has done something wicked, who knows that you know it is wicked, and who is at once defiant and remorseful. She smiled ruefully.

"I'm awful, aren't I?" she said.

I decided on the direct approach. "Yes, you're awful," I answered, "but you're wonderful, too."

Warily, sniffing at confidences like exploratory dogs, we approached friendship. It did not come that afternoon or

that evening or during the long sunny Sunday we spent on the beach. Nor did it flower in the next week end or even in the one after that. But over the months, responding to her casual invitations, sometimes alone when Pete couldn't get away from town, I learned how to take her frenzies, to understand her desperation for affection, to laugh at her invective.

"Mickey is an egomaniac and a hypocritical Lesbian," she would announce. Once she would have shocked me. She did still, a little. But imperceptibly I had grown used to the exaggeration which characterized California conversation. And though I might not have bothered to commit myself on Mickey's personality and sexual behavior, it was something of an honest relief to hear someone else say openly what I hid in the onion skins of my secret thoughts.

Once, arriving late at night for the week end, I found the living room empty and a note directing me to the guest room. Carrying my suitcase in one hand I blundered through the darkness of the guest bedroom, groping for a light. Just as I was about to reach it, I was assaulted from behind. The force of the impact against my back threw me forward against the bed, and I felt sharp nails digging into my flesh. In the pounding terror that rises from the conjunction of darkness and surprise I remembered Pete's stories of Carol's attempts to kill him. My heart was racing when I shook the Siamese cat from my back, and my laugh was shaky.

Yet, now that I knew her, I was convinced that as angry as she might ever be, Carol would never harm any of her children. But accepting this, I was forced to acknowledge that Pete had lied to me about her. Why? Perhaps because it amused him, and it made a good story, and a Californian is as prone to exaggeration as an Irishman. Perhaps because

it was the only way he could express his resentment of a dominating unconventional mother. I never really knew. When I held his hand or gazed upon his captivating square chin I told myself that he had only embroidered a little. But alone, in San Francisco or Carmel, I couldn't avoid recognizing the tiny crack in the hero's armor.



I LEARNED to adapt quickly to spontaneity of action and not to be surprised at anything.

Margaret Creps, my next-door neighbor who lent me her flatiron because I let her use my telephone, leaned down from her window one sunny morning and called, "By the way, did you know that your house was once occupied by an Eskimo prostitute?"

"My God—when?"

"Oh, tenant before last. She was very nice, and she had a wonderful garden out there. I'll give you some carnation slips, if you like."

The telephone shrilled at four in the morning, and I heard the stern voice of Pete's brother Charles announcing: "Margaret, I have just ordered three hundred undressed chickens to be delivered to your house in the morning—collect." He hung up sharply, and although the chickens never arrived, I spent a panicky morning thinking they might.

I woke up at five one morning and found three of the young radicals I had met at Tony Nicco's perched on the edge of my bathtub, deep in a discussion of the editorial policies of *The People's World*, the left-wing paper in San Francisco. They had evidently climbed through the open bathroom window and they had considerably found my jug of Burgundy and three cups without waking me.

"We wanted a quiet place to talk," they explained.

Pete would telephone me at one in the morning: "Let's drive down to Carmel tonight. It's only 127 miles and we'll get there before dawn. We can pick up Mother and the kids and go on down to the Big Sur for the week end."

The Big Sur is a stretch of mountains about thirty miles south of Carmel. Covered with sagebrush, wild lilac and live oaks, they are the loneliest mountains imaginable, dropping down sharply to jagged beaches along the sea. With the Stuart clan, we did spend a week end there once, in an adobe cabin perched on a cliff five hundred feet above the sea. There was no stove, no electricity, no telephone, no radio, no newspapers, no bathroom, no neighbors—only firelight and candles, stars and mountains and the ocean, and, in ravines between the mountains, towering redwoods and overhanging ferns. Carol and the children went completely native, Pete and I walked long miles over the mountains and along the beach—and the two days there were the happiest I have ever lived.

But Carmel was more often the locale of our impetuous excursions. If I had had my way we would have gone there every week end, and during the summer we almost did.

For in spite of tea and gift shoppes, self-conscious Hansel and Gretel cottages, and a main street infested with large women in smocks and dirty sandals, Carmel remains my own combination of heaven, Utopia, and the happy hunting grounds.

The long stretch of beach, which I played on as a child, is still dazzling white and soft to the touch of bare skin. The dark needles of a Monterey cypress crush in the adult's hand in the same prickly way they did in the child's, the hard shaft of the ice plant breaks with just as satisfying

neatness. And a driftwood fire against the dunes burns as brightly as it did fifteen years ago.

Walking with Pete in the soft brown dust of the unpaved Carmel streets, I would see a strange flower, triumphantly blossoming on a lattice-trained vine. A purple flower, striped and mottled, its petals curling away from its trumpetlike base. I would step off the road and cup the flower in my hand and stare at it, and there again was the miracle trick of memory. I remembered what I had forgotten, the flower and the vine, the feeling of being a small, tanned child, of adults stooping beside me with frightening swiftness, murmuring with loving laughter . . . "a passion flower, darling."

One sunny afternoon, guided by a letter from Mother and the memory of an old Carmel resident, I backtracked to the scene of my first disastrous experience in the theater. For many years Carmel has had the open-air Forest Theater, complete with stage and terraced seats. But in the days of my stubborn childhood a pine-covered hillside sloping down into a bare little meadow was used for the presentation of the spectacles which exercised the talents of the early Carmelites. With the headlights of their automobiles flickering over the scene, the audience sat on the hillside rising from the far side of the meadow.

On this occasion Charles King Van Riper had written a modern version of the Pied Piper legend, ranging from flights of solemn poetry to elaborately mannered symbolic pageantry. My father, playing one of the peasantry, was confident that four-year-old Margaret was brilliantly capable of taking a small part in the play—that of a child who followed the piper through the woods. The day before the play, on a similar sunny afternoon, I was taken to the

scene of action and anxiously coached. I was to stand behind a big pine tree, and when Mother touched me on the shoulder I was to wander slowly down the path toward the meadow. When I reached the big tree stump in the middle of the meadow I was to look around for a moment and then wander up the path beyond the stump, following the sound of flute music up in the forest.

Dad took me by the hand and led me along the path I was to follow. When we reached the stump it suddenly hit me that tomorrow night I would be all alone, Daddy wouldn't be holding my hand securely in his, as he was now. I started to wail.

"No!" I yelled. "No, no, *no!*"

Dad was desperate. "Look, darling," he said, patting the smooth top of the tree stump, which came just to my chin, "tomorrow night there will be a Hershey bar waiting for you, right here in the middle of this stump. All you'll have to do is come down and get it and just walk up the path, and I'll be waiting for you."

It was a deal.

The pageant went off with incredible smoothness, while I waited behind my pine tree, visions of smooth brown chocolate tickling my tongue. With a crowd of dancing villagers, Dad had gone onstage and disappeared in the forest across the meadow. While the audience held its breath at the beauty of the scene, the piper, tall and slim with a jaunty green cap perched on his black hair, pirouetted across the scene, a silver pipe at his lips. The hillside was empty for a moment, while soft flute music drifted through the night. Then Mother gave me a little shove, and I trotted down toward the tree stump, toward the chocolate bar, toward bliss.

I reached the stump. The light was dim and I couldn't

see the candy bar. I stretched up and with a small grasping hand felt every inch of the stump's flat circle. No candy. With increasing anxiety, deaf to the murmuring confusion of the audience and angry hisses from the wings, I searched the roots and the grass at the stump's base. No candy. Then with devastating clarity I realized that I had been betrayed, and I knew for the first time that the promises of adults were false. I was crushed and miserable at the knowledge, but even more than that, I was angry.

"Daddy!" I shouted furiously. "You forgot the Hershey bar!"

It broke up the show. The author never forgave me, but on the sunny afternoon when I went back and smoothed the weather-beaten tree stump while time whirled about my hand, it seemed to me that the laughter still echoed over the hillside.

Smells brought back the earliest memories. Floods of soft and helpless nostalgia for childhood would pour over me when the sea winds carried the sharp smell of sagebrush, the herbal smell of yellow sand verbena, the salty odor of the drying whips of seaweed along the tide line, their bulbous tips squeezed open by a child's playful toe.

At night we walked along the hard edge of beach, beside the thundering surf. As a wave smoothed over the tilting sand in its last surge of energy, the bright stars were reflected for a flickering moment in the poised wash of water. For the length of a sharply drawn breath, or of eternity, the stars quivered like fireflies in the trembling sand and were gone. I looked up and saw Orion, gigantic and brilliant, remembered the first memory of my life—sleeping on a porch in Carmel, lying tightly curled up under a down quilt and staring at the stars just beyond the tips of the fir trees. That was the era when Mother used to try to get me to say my

prayers at night, and it was only a little later when she gave up.

"For Thine is the Kingdom, amen," I would conclude decisively.

"For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory," Mother would prompt gently.

The child me: "If God's got a Kingdom He has Power and Glory, too, so I'm not going to bother about it!"

Together Pete and I explored the crags and inlets of the rugged promontory of Point Lobos, gathered abalone shells down in the whaler's cove, mistook the orange fungus on the under branches of the cypress trees for the light of sunset, and braced ourselves in the stiff wind at the farthermost point to watch the sea lions on the rocks offshore.

Pete had grown up amid this wildness, had swum in the moonlight in the treacherous surf off the point, and as I watched him swing dexterously down a craggy bluff or leap from a rock the second before the ocean swept over it, I realized that here, far more than in the noisy bars of San Francisco, he was most at home. The wildness, the almost mystical ruthlessness of this coast had soaked into him, had filled him with a turbulence, a strange quality of restless darkness.

It was, in a less accentuated way, the same quality Robinson Jeffers, whose gray tower I could see across the Carmel Bay, reflected in his bitter characters. And it was a quality I found in most of the young people I met who had grown up in Carmel. Exuberance, restlessness, irresponsibility, a tendency toward exaggerated speech and behavior, deep drinking and quick laughter, all these were part of the pattern. I felt it was due to some mysterious atmosphere generated by the almost Cockaigne-like beauty

of the Monterey coast. Betty Strobel, a thoughtful and somber young woman whose home was in Carmel, had a different theory.

"It's our parents," she said. "Writers like Mary Austin and Jimmy Hopper and George Sterling built the first cabins here around 1904, and for ten or twenty years nobody else came but more writers and artists and other strange creative people who had the strength of character and will to pioneer in a new country. And those people brought their babies or had them here, and those babies are us. Most of the young people you meet are the sons and daughters of early Carmel settlers, and early Carmel settlers were all geniuses and eccentrics to begin with. So that means that most of us had intelligent, creative, ego-expressive parents, and everybody knows that that's the hardest kind of parent to have. Therefore, most of us in Carmel have spent our young lives trying to assert our own individuality in the face of our parents' overdeveloped personalities. That's why we always seem in revolt, why we're restless, why, really, we're unsure of ourselves. We're still fighting those brilliant, dominating, beloved and accursed people who borned us."

According to some early settlers, young Peter Steffens, the son of Lincoln Steffens and Ella Winter, was brought up in a manner that was the ultimate in Carmel child raising. It also caused the ultimate in eyebrow raising in some quarters.

"Say," seven-year-old Peter would demand, "is a president better than a king?"

"Well, Peter," Steffens would answer, "the milkman will be coming along any moment and he might be able to give you some ideas. And you might go speak to the grocer up

on Ocean Avenue. And drop in at the bank. Tell the president who you are and ask him what he thinks."

So Peter would trot off and interview the town. Returning triumphantly at sunset he'd report that everybody had different ideas but mostly they liked presidents better than kings. So he guessed he did, too.

"That's fine," Steffens would say. "So do I."

When Peter was eight he was carried home by the scruff of the neck by an angry grocer from whom he had tried to filch an apple. The grocer demanded that then and there Mr. Steffens instruct Peter in the evils of stealing. Imperturbably Steffens lifted Peter on his knee, while, arms akimbo, the grocer waited for justice.

"The trouble with you, Peter," Steffens said, "is that your aim is too low. An apple isn't really worth getting caught for, is it? Now if you're going to steal, the things to go out for are the big things, like railroads and banks and governments. The most successful men in the world are those who aim highest in their thievery—directors of corporations, bank presidents, politicians. They operate on such a large scale that they never get caught. Do you understand?"

Peter said he understood, and Steffens smiled benignly at the apoplectic grocer.

My own memories of Steffens are those of an awed child who was allowed to pass the cocktails at dinner parties before being banished to bed. In Paris, when I was seven years old, meeting the spry little man who talked so incomprehensibly with my parents, I was impressed because he was the only adult I knew who remembered that I liked to be called Jane.

In New York, when I was thirteen, he ignored a roomful of glittering strangers to discuss gravely the merits of a cabalistic system whereby you crossed out the letters of your



name with those in the name of the boy of your choice and discovered whether the boy loved you or felt only deep friendship.

Visiting in Carmel when I was sixteen, I saw Steffens in his last illness, when his sunny bedroom was the Mecca of all the bewildered young radicals and forgiving old conservatives in California. Lying back on the high-piled pillows, he looked thin and yellow, but his pointed goatee still shook when he laughed, and his eyes twinkled with the mischief of his perpetual paradoxes.

He teased me about my parents. "Never mind, Margaret," he said, "there's no inheritance of acquired characteristics."

Entering the room with a glass of orange juice, Ella Winter commented: "As the wife of little Peter's father, I hope that's true."

Weirdly raised or not, rebellious or not, the children of Carmel have the same emotional attachment to the place that their parents felt when they first saw the empty sand dunes, and the pine-covered hillsides where the sun sifted in silence onto the carpets of brown needles. Although they may never have heard of George Sterling's sacred grove, where the tall tree trunks were hung with the blanched skulls of animals, though they drive cars at a terrifying clip on the unpaved roads, although the cow tail that was Mary Austin's door pull has long since rotted away, they will unite with their parents against the paving of the Carmel roads, in keeping Carmel as much as possible the way it was when the first settlers came.

As recently as 1938, Herbert Herron, moving spirit of the Forest Theater, was elected mayor on a platform: "Keep Carmel as it is." And some years before that Perry New-

berry, a journalist, writer, and artist then running for mayor, tacked this poster to the town bulletin board:

Don't vote for Perry Newberry

If you hope to see Carmel become a city.

If you want its growth boosted.

If you desire its commercial success.

If street lamps on its corners mean happiness to you.

If concrete street pavements represent your civic ambitions.

If you have less regard for the unique character of Carmel than for the opportunity of money making.

If you think that a glass factory is of greater value than a sand dune, or a millionaire than an artist, or a mansion than a little brown cottage.

If you truly want Carmel to become a boosting, hustling, wide-awake, lively metropolis

Don't vote for Perry Newberry!

He was elected.

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*A GATHERING OF BUTTERCUPS*

ABOUT once every two months I would receive an unusually anxious letter from Mother. "No one has mentioned you in letters from San Francisco," she would write. "Are you neglecting our friends and relatives out there, dear?" Or else the letter might read: "Aunt Marion wrote me that she saw you in the Civic Center Plaza late one night when she was coming home from a concert. She said you were arm in arm with two big men, and that all three of you were skipping, and singing 'Roll Out the Barrel.' Marion said you seemed to be having a wonderful time."

Nothing reproachful, nothing sinister, nothing to indicate a withdrawal of the occasional family checks which I found so useful. But I always took the warning. For two days after the arrival of the anxious letters I would be busy, telephoning Aunt Flora for a little chat, writing a note or two to my cousins across the bay, riding the streetcar to the other end of the city to drop in on Aunt Marion and incidentally mention the Civic Center incident. The boys I had been with that night were artists, I would explain, and we'd just seen the ballet. Well, you know how painters are about ballet! We may have looked drunk, but really it was just excitement. That one was easy, as it happened to be the truth. So then Aunt Marion, who is a very good gal, would write Mother about the fine young friends I seemed to be

making, and there would be peace in the mailbox for another two months.

One time, however, when Pete and I had been embroiled in a series of house parties, picnics across the bay, and nightly excursions to Jack's, a Negro dive where Saunders King was playing, I realized that three months had passed without my seeing or even telephoning any of the good and decorous people on whom my parents depended for impartial news of my welfare. I realized it abruptly one morning at seven-thirty, with the arrival of a telegram from Mother, in which all varieties of concern were skillfully expressed in twenty-five eloquent words.

Pondering the question over coffee, I decided that the usual methods of conciliation would be inadequate this time and that the situation called for a tea party. Nothing short of an actual demonstration of my gentle and ladylike capabilities as a hostess, a view of my impeccable housekeeping, and a little polite conversation with some of my less raffish female friends, would reassure the ladies who were supposed to be keeping an eye on me.

Not that I was hoodwinking. Technically, my behavior had been beyond reproach. But I had fallen into a pattern in which entertaining was done with a jug of wine and some salami, in which the dishes were not washed right after dinner, in which I had grown used to uninhibited conversation and boisterous behavior. And much as I loved my relatives, somehow they didn't seem to fit into the picture of life with which I was currently entranced.

Allowing two days in which to clean the apartment and prepare the tea things, I started telephoning. Aunt Flora said she would be very interested to see where I lived. My cousin said she was going to be in town at the museum (in San Francisco, incidentally, "the museum" always means the

San Francisco Museum of Art, although there are dozens of others). But she'd be delighted to drop in for tea. She sounded surprised. So did Aunt Marion, who nevertheless accepted. Leanore, the Marin County debutante, who, in spite of that, was sweet and gay, and Victoria Pike, a sober and talented artist who lived on the Hill, both accepted, not knowing that their main function was to show Aunt Flora, my cousin, and Aunt Marion what nice new friends I was making. To make sure nothing would go wrong, I called up everyone else I knew and told them I was leaving town for the week end.

For two days I washed windows, scrubbed woodwork, and waxed floors. Having a vague idea that the older generation associates a well-kept linen closet with a good housekeeper, I borrowed a portable closet from the girl next door and stacked it neatly with the sheets and towels she also lent me. Those I had were always in use or at the Chinese laundry.

The morning of the tea party I walked down to Chinatown—a ten-minute stroll from the Hill—and bought expensive green tea in a dark little store. At the Italian caterers I picked up the bread-and-butter strips, the pink-and-white *petits fours* I had ordered. With a bunch of daffodils and a sedate gray dress back from the cleaners over my arm, I was loaded down but happy and assured as I toiled up Union Street in the noon sunshine.

For an hour everything went beautifully. Complimented on my housekeeping, my tea service (borrowed, of course), and my skill as a hostess, I began to relax. Leanore and Victoria were perfectly charming, and Aunt Flora was obviously impressed by Leah's family connections. No one had spilled any tea, I hadn't put sugar in the wrong cup. I

had restrained myself from smoking too much. Life Can Be Beautiful!

Then it happened. Below the level of our polite conversation I began to hear a murmur of voices coming down the street, snatches of song, a rumble of masculine laughter. I leaned forward tensely, smiling apologetically while I tried to place the tones and to decide whether the noisy group was going to turn up my steps. It was. It did. Thunderous banging on the door, like the explosion of doomsday. Slowly I rose, slowly I opened the door.

On the porch, in their Sunday best, rocking on their heels and grinning with the joy of shore leave, stood four of the stalwart men from the *West Wind*—Jack and Russ, the two debonair and tattooed engineers; Joe, the fat and sweating steward; Smitty, the brilliant little Danish third mate.

"Hello there!" they boomed, sticking out their big fists one by one.

"Just got into Frisco yesterday," Jack said. "Thought we'd come up and see how you was getting along."

They were swell guys. On the freighter they had been my good friends and always respectful companions. They had introduced me to a tough and honest world of hard work, tides and winds, engines and monotony. They had done it so naturally, so vividly, that at the end of three weeks I knew something about a world I never knew before; I understood fighting through long years for decent working conditions, I understood innocent laughter at dirty jokes, I understood why some of them, in desperation, drank anything they could lay hands on—even hair tonic and perfume.

I had never expected to see them again, I was terribly happy to see them, and I wished in panic that they would go far, far away. But here they were, and there was nothing to do but bring them in.

"Jesus," said Smitty, striding into the room and eyeing the transfixed tea party, "what a gathering of buttercups!"

Jack and Russ and Joe were equally poised. Rich or poor, black or white, old or young, it was all the same to them. They were proud men, and they didn't change their personality or conversation for anyone. I'd seen it on the freighter, and I knew what would happen. If anyone was going to be embarrassed by the juxtaposition of what is known as "different social classes," it would not be these big boys. They were at home anywhere.

"These are friends of mine," I said to the room in general and managed an introduction. The boys acknowledged it politely and started looking the shack over.

The ladies, in their flowery hats and veils, began talking politely to cover the awkward pause, but I saw their side-wise glances following the boys as they prowled noisily around the shack. Jack's black eye seemed peculiarly fascinating to them. Victoria was looking at me with amused sympathy, and I shrugged my shoulders at her and brought up some chairs for the boys.

"What we need in this here party is a nice cold case a beer," said Joe, mopping his forehead and slumping onto the bench by the fireplace.

"Yeah," said Russ, "we didn't think you were one of these tea-drinking gals. . . ." He took off his coat and tossed it on the table, revealing a white sweat shirt and bare white arms. Tattooed the length of his arms were serpents, battleships, roses, and the names of long-forgotten girls. He noticed Aunt Flora, bolt upright on her chair, staring at him. Pleased at her interest, he sat down beside her and pulled up a trouser leg above his knee.

"You'll like this one," he said chummily; "this is a special."

On his bony knee was tattooed the face of a girl, with

the name Ethel inscribed below the patella. As he shifted his leg and waved it around, the face contorted into hideous grimaces. With delicate fingers he twisted the face into even more gruesome shapes.

"She was a little bitch," he confided. "Stole all my dough, right here in Frisco, then lit out with another guy for Chicago. But I got revenge, all right. Went down to one of the tattoo parlors near Market Street, and had this picture of her put on. Now I can twist it around and it's almost as good as punching that little sea gull's face in!"

"That's extremely—interesting," said Aunt Flora weakly.

Jack came over and slapped her on the back.

"That's nothin', lady!" he bellowed. "Look at this!"

With a quick movement his shirt was off, and his hairy torso was revealed to our startled eyes. In the middle of his brown back was tattooed a large gravestone bearing the word Mother. Sprays of roses surrounded it, and a mound of realistic grass stretched down below his waist. As he flexed his muscles the roses seemed to sway, the grass to tremble.

"I was in Singapore," he said over his shoulder, "and it was Mother's Day. I'd been on a bender for two days, blind drunk, and I woke up in a alley. Then I remembered it was Mother's Day, and I started thinkin' about how good she'd always been to me, and how I never did do nothin' for her. So I went into a Chink place and had this done."

"Has your mother been dead a long time?" asked Aunt Marion sympathetically.

"Aw, she ain't dead," said Jack. "But I knew she would be some day, so I thought a stone would be better in the long run."

He put on his shirt, tucked in the ends, and smiled boy-





ishly at the stir he had caused. I thought I had better create a diversion. My cousin looked rather edgy.

"I don't suppose you boys would care for any tea?" I asked. "I'm sorry there's no liquor in the house."

"Oh, we always bring our own," grinned Smitty, pulling a fifth of bourbon from his sailor jacket. His eyes twinkled at me with impudent laughter, and I knew he had sized up the situation and was ready to give the scene his version of a hotfoot. He took a long drink from the bottle and passed it to Joe. Joe drank too and wiped his lips with a hairy hand.

"That stuff's O.K.," said Joe, "but what I like is a nice cold bottl' a beer. All the way around this last trip I just kept thinkin', when I get to Pedro I'm gonna get me a nice case a beer, and maybe one bottl' a whisky to give my friends a drink when they come on board. . . ."

Jack laughed with heavy sarcasm and turned to Aunt Flora. I noticed that her bonnet had slipped slightly to one side and that she seemed too hypnotized to straighten it.

"Why, you shoulda seen Joe at Puerto Rico!" Jack sneered. "Never saw the place. Just stayed in his bunk a week; once in awhile he'd rear up from his pilla and bellow—we had a black nigger second cook then—and he'd run in and pour another bottl' a rum down Joe's throat. . . ."

Russ scratched an armpit reflectively and smiled. "You should talk about Rico, Jack! Why, you were so drunk—"

"I was drunk! Why, I was sleeping nice and peaceful like, when you come banging on my porthole about 3:00 A.M. 'Hey, Jack,' you yell in a stage whisper, 'come on out. I gotta coupl' a girls waiting down at the corner.' So I get dressed and come out, and those girls, they was as brown as chocolate!"

Russ took a gulp from the bottle and said quietly, "A pleasant little son of a bitch."

I nodded automatically and studied my fingernails, not daring to look at the ladies. Jack and Russ, oblivious to my quiet desperation, went on wrangling.

Jack winked at me. "An' in Baltimore the time we got thrown in the bucket . . . why, I was all set to go to a show, Wallace Beery it was . . . so I met Russ at a bar and he says, 'Oh, let's have just one.' And, oh, boy, that's when I started on the skid road."

Russ protested. "My intentions was as pure as Mary's breath! Just because I drop into one gin mill . . ."

"One, hell!" interrupted Smitty, grinning from his perch on the window sill.

Jack turned to me, looking sheepish. "Anyway, I always pick a place that has stairs goin' up to the street, not down. Then it don't hurt so much when you get kicked out!"

Aunt Marion was interested in this bit of curiosa. She leaned forward and studied Jack.

"You mean you deliberately choose your drinking places knowing that you might be ejected?" she asked.

"That's sure as hell what I mean, lady," he drawled.

Joe was still sweating, over on the bench. "Yeah," he said, meditating to himself, "in Pedro I got me a nice case a beer, an' a bottl' a whisky. . . ."

By this time I had almost given up caring. I was sure that within a few hours a cascade of telegrams describing in full my dissolute and drunken companions would be burning the wires toward home. No doubt the ladies were determined to hang on to the bitter end to get the complete sordid picture—or to save me from worse than death. At any rate, no one showed any signs of moving.

I went out to the kitchen to make a fresh pot of tea and

to lean my hot forehead for a moment against the cool glass of the kitchen window. When I came back Smitty was just starting a story. His voice was always loud and laughing, and that day I thought it sounded particularly like W. C. Fields'. His black eyes shone with mischief as he watched me pour fresh tea. He leaned forward and scooped up a handful of pink *petits fours*, then went on talking.

"Well, like I was telling you," he said, "we was on this ship, the *Sonoma*, comin' home from India. On board we had an old guy, one of those old codgers, y'know, he was goin' back to California to die. Well, he started in dyin' too soon . . . he got awful sick on the ship, and the doc started treatin' him. This old guy was rich; he had a deck stateroom with big windows, looking right out on the deck.

"He was awful sick. He don't know what goes on, so all the crew was up there, hanging in those windows, watching the old guy pass out. All them guys, peering over each other's shoulders, the cigarettes hangin' outa their mouths, and all yellin' advice to the doc."

Smitty paused to ram another pink *petit four* in his mouth. Somehow he managed to talk and chew and laugh at the same time.

"The doc, he was a little potbellied guy, with a goatee. He don't know much. But this old codger, he's in bad shape, y'know. He's almost gone, so the doc, he looks up at the guys in the window, watchin' the old man die, and the doc says, 'Think I oughta give him another shot, boys?' And they all nod their heads and say, 'Sure, doc, go ahead.'

"So the doc does. Well, that seems to kill the old guy for sure. My word, he goes out cold. So the doc says, 'Well, boys, I guess he's dead for sure.' And the boys they all go, 'Tch, tch.'

"Then the doc starts to lay the old guy out. An' one leg

is bent up in the air, the way they get. So the doc takes both hands, and goes scrunch! and pushes it down.

"At that, the old guy comes to and starts yellin' holy Jesus. Seems like he ain't dead at all, but the doc had broke his leg. You shoulda seen those boys in the window laugh! Doc had to put the leg in a cast, and get a special wheel chair when we come to Frisco. Old guy was fit as a fiddle, except for that leg."

Aunt Flora shuddered, and her pink teacup clattered nervously as she set it on the table. That does it, I thought. Now she'll go. Pray God, now they'll all go. But she only leaned back against the wall, waiting for further developments.

Unable to bear it, I went into the bathroom and rubbed cold water on my temples. It didn't seem to help, and when I got back Russ was trying to urge my cousin to have a slug from the bottle, Joe was telling Aunt Marion about the Frisco water-front dives, rather vividly, and Smitty was staring at Aunt Flora's formidable bosom, with its impressive display of pearl and diamond pins. Jack stood up and stretched.

"Where's the can?" he called to me. I gestured weakly.

When he returned he was laughing.

"Just thought of a story," he said. "Guess it isn't such a nice one, but it's awful funny." His childish blue eyes beamed at us, and the square brown face creased with smiles.

"My uncle had a watermelon farm in Imperial Valley once, and he had a bunch of Hindus working for him there—about thirty of 'em. Well, when a Hindu goes to the bathroom he washes himself in a little tin can fulla water that he keeps with him all the time. An' you know, he never uses that hand to touch food with? Never does!" Jack

paused, looking at us with innocent admiration for the cleanly Hindu.

"Well, my uncle saw they hid all these little cans out in the bushes, and my uncle, he's a practical joker, sort of. So he steals out and empties all the water, and fills those cans with turpentine, and then he just waits and watches till they use them, which they always do at the same time.

"Well, my God! You shoulda seen those Hindus jump! They was boundin' over hedges in all directions, faster than hell, and it seemed like they never did stop running. Jesus, it was *awful* funny!"

There was a dead and appalling silence. Oh, God, I thought, they think he was insulting them by telling a dirty story. They don't know that he was just being funny, that his mind is cleaner probably than mine is, or most of my friends'. Oh, Lord, I can never explain to them. . . .

Then, like the sweet sound of peace bells, my cousin laughed. She couldn't stop, her delicate face flushed with the laughter and she rocked in her chair. The twitches at the corners of Aunt Marion's mouth suddenly became uncontrollable, and she too exploded with mirth. Below their gales sounded Aunt Flora's rumbling chuckle. The pearl and diamond pins rode madly on her heaving bosom.

"Oh, my," gasped Aunt Flora, dabbing at her moist eyes with a lace handkerchief, "oh, my, I haven't laughed like that in years!"

ALL of a sudden we had a party on our hands. What had been a nightmare turned into a fiesta, and I was hardly surprised when Russ, looking at his watch, said, "Why don't you girls come on with us, and we'll have dinner and make a night of it?"

I looked dubiously at Aunt Flora, Aunt Marion, and my cousin, and saw that they had gone just about as far as they could go. They had been wonderful, but I couldn't really expect any more from them. Besides, they had homes and families waiting for them—they weren't foot-loose and fancy-free like Vicky and Leanore and me. Thank goodness.

In a flurry of straightened bonnets and merry good-bys the ladies departed. I followed them out on the porch, and Aunt Flora whispered, "My dear, I'm so happy to know you're meeting such fine, natural, real people. So charming and honest! I shall write your mother to that effect." And she swept down the rickety stairs to her waiting limousine.

Inside the shack the boys were persuading Leanore and Vicky to go along with them. It wasn't a hard job. Leanore, gently reared and protected from roughnecks all her life, looked completely dazed but willing. Vicky, normally interested only in painting and serious discussion, seemed puzzled and amused at the same time.

Half an hour later we found ourselves on the way to the Canary Den on Drumm Street. Our taxis wound through the dark streets near the water front, and I recognized the

section as the produce district where, in a few hours, farm wagons would unload their crates of lettuce and artichokes, the dusty roosters would flutter and fuss in the chicken-wire cages, and the occasional rotten cantaloupe would be tossed in the gutter, splitting as it rolled. Now the only spot of light came from the basement level windows of the Swedish restaurant, known throughout San Francisco as the only place where you could get a seven-course dinner for twenty-five cents.

"You sure you gals want to go here?" asked Jack. "We could take you somewhere better than this . . . just got paid off."

"All my life," Leanore said wistfully, "I have wanted to go to a restaurant on the water front. This is the first opportunity I have had."

"O.K.," he said, "hang on!" And he led her gallantly down the stairs and into the beanery.

Apart from the yellow canaries and the white rabbits in a long glass case down the center of the room, the place was the nearest I had come to shipboard since I walked down the gangway of the *West Wind*. The coffee came in thick white mugs, and the food was equally sturdy. By calling each item on the menu a separate course it really did come to a seven-course dinner, and it really was a quarter a dinner. The long tables were filled with tanned men in blue jeans, sailor jackets, and little knitted wool caps. Swedes with bright hair and heavy accents, silent Lascars with drooping mustaches, wizened limeys, and ruddy boys from Wisconsin sat shoulder to shoulder, not talking, shoveling in the meat and potatoes with incredible speed and glancing with indifference at us.

We got through dinner with equal speed, and afterward



the boys insisted that we accompany them to the William Tell Hotel. Vicky raised her eyebrows.

"Oh, it ain't like that!" roared Russ, poking her in the ribs. "It's a Swiss joint where they got good beer and you can dance!"

"Dance?" asked Vicky, doubtfully.

"Sure, girly," said Joe, still sweating. "You and me'll really cut a rug."

I had been to the place once before and loved it. The narrow little doorway on Clay Street led into the nearest approximation of an old-fashioned beer garden that I could imagine. Rather shaky murals of Swiss Alps and misty lakes covered the walls, and a "Swiss Mountain" orchestra sawed away on a little platform above the small dance floor. The musicians all worked in their shirt sleeves and stopped frequently for long swallows of beer, wiping the foam from flowing mustaches before taking up a polka where they had left off. The music was fast and bouncy and everyone danced with everyone else, a funny little hop hop skip, round round round step that you picked up quickly if you didn't want to be knocked down by the people behind you. Families sat at the big wooden tables, bouncing pink babies on fat knees, occasionally slipping the baby a taste of beer, smiling and singing and swaying in time to the music.

The first time I went there was with an old beau and his current flame. She was a bored and beautiful creature taking a week end away from her husband in Los Angeles to renew the fires of youth with my friend, Jack, and to buy a raft of clothes at the San Francisco stores. Groomed to the last eyelash, and a mistress of the derogatory snuffle, she would have been more at home in the Palace's Pied Piper

Bar than in a beer garden. With elegant disdain she watched the noisy gyrations on the dance floor and nodded bored permission when Jack asked me to dance.

For fifteen minutes we whirled and twisted in a modified polka, laughing and tripping and having a glorious time. We returned to the table glowing with joy and perspiration, breathless and happy.

"Wouldn't you like to try it, Christine?" Jack asked.

Her soft brown eyes glanced for a moment at my shiny face, then slowly swept the length of my sturdy figure. She smiled exquisitely, and a red nail flicked the ash off her cigarette.

"I'm afraid *I'm* not the robust type," she said sweetly.

Unfortunately, there is a penalty for murder in California.

Tonight, thank God, Christine was far away, and nothing but amity and mutual admiration pervaded our little group. With great joy I sat at a wooden table with Jack, watching Vicky and Joe bounce around under the big electric fan, while Leanore and Russ swooped and twirled against the background of a snowy Alp. Russ had taken off his coat again, and the tattooed red roses on his arms showed up brilliantly against Leanore's smart black dress. Once she slipped and sat down very hard in the center of the floor, but Russ scooped her up again in a second, and no one paid any attention.

Smitty elbowed his way through the crowd, carrying a fistful of beer mugs.

"This joint is the only place in Frisco that's like Santos," he said, setting the mugs down and shoving one in front of each of us. "And Santos is the only place in the world where people have a real good time without getting all liquored up. In Santos they waltz all night, that's all they do. It's in South America, and it's a good town, that Santos."

He took a long gulp of beer and pulled me to my feet. "Come on," he said, "this here polka is a good dance, too."

It was. But in the middle of it, Smitty suddenly stopped dancing and looked at me with his inscrutable, shining eyes.

"Did I ever tell you about the Danish sea king?" he asked.

I dodged a whirling couple and said, "Yes, Smitty, you did."

He didn't seem to hear me, and his black eyes were solemn.

"The door in the cliff opened wide, and the sea king rode through," he said. "That really happened. And he was never seen again." For a moment he stared at me. Then he grinned and we started dancing again. Smitty loved fairy tales. On the ship he had told me a lot of them, and he always pretended to believe them.

When we got back to the table the others were ringed around it, drinking their beer and watching the crowd. A very young, very blond soldier leaned against a post near our group, looking wistful, and somehow forlorn. Smitty slapped him on the back and asked him to have a drink with us.

Leanore's training at cotillions and finishing schools rushed to the aid of the soldier.

"Are you stationed in San Francisco, corporal?" she asked, graciously. The boy looked her over carefully, and his round red face broke into a beaming expanse of white teeth.

"Are you kiddin'?" he said.

There didn't seem to be any answer to this. Leanore shrugged. I thought I'd try.

"How do you like the town?" I asked him.

"Are you kiddin'?"

He looked amiable, and as if he wanted to talk. One by one we all tried him on every subject we could think of. Invariably he produced his conversational short circuit for an answer.

"What part of the country you from, soldier?"

And the answer, mock-derisive, loud and happy: "Are you kiddin'?"

For awhile we talked among ourselves, and the soldier listened, apparently bewildered at hearing words of any consecutive value. After fifteen minutes Leanore, who hated a conversational dullard even more than she hated onions and garlic, made another valiant effort to draw the boy into our group.

"I hope you're not far from your home," she said, politely. His forehead creased with an effort to think of an appropriate answer.

"Are you kiddin'?" he shot back.

Leanore muttered, "Really . . ." and turned toward Joe, who was rolling a cigarette with clumsy fingers. And then our soldier took a deep breath and uttered his first consecutive sentence of the evening.

"I don't think the lady likes me," he growled.

Leanore turned toward him with a cold stare.

"Are you kiddin'?" she asked.

After awhile the mountain music and the noise palled, and we wandered out to Portsmouth Square to decide on the next port of call. As we sat on the railing around the park, swinging our feet and talking, Smitty said suddenly, "Hey, sing that song you taught us on the ship. The one you said your old man liked so much."

So I sang it, and the second time around they all joined

in, and toward the end a cop coming off duty from the Hall of Justice across the street wandered over and hummed along with us:

I have led a good life, full of peace and quiet;  
I shall have an old age, full of rum and riot.  
I have been a good boy, wed to peace and study;  
I shall have an old age, ribald, coarse, and bloody.

I have never cut throats, even when I yearned to;  
Never sang the dirty songs that my fancy turned to;  
I have been a nice boy and done what was expected;  
I shall be an old bum, loved but unrespected.

As we walked on toward Telegraph Hill, the conjunction of the song and the familiar streets made me remember the stories of Sanguinetti's, a gathering place in my parents' day, where Dad's song and many others were sung by groups very much like my own.

Sanguinetti's was an all-night eating place down in the produce district, where rivermen, teamsters, and green-goods men came to eat after they had finished their business in artichokes and lettuce, carrots and oranges. The place opened at midnight and was at its best at four in the morning, bursting with light and noise, the clank of heavily loaded plates on marble-topped tables, the splash of red wine in thick glasses. For rewrite men from the papers on near-by Market Street it was relaxation and color after the dreary hours on night rewrite, and Mother always waited at Sanguinetti's for Dad to get off at 2:00 A.M.

One night they went there with a young writer named Pauline and her mother. Pauline was one of those sweet girls whose every thought is noble and whose straight little mouth seems to be a symbol of the straight and uncompromising little soul inside. But Pauline's mother was dif-

ferent. In the midst of the singing and the shouted quips across the table, she looked at Pauline and frowned.

"For heaven's sake, Pauly," she complained, "why don't you learn to relax and have some fun?"

Pauline turned pale and her eyes flashed.

"All right, I will," she said.

She eyed a long loaf of French bread, lying uncut in the center of the table. With a swift gesture she picked it up at one end and cracked it over the bald head of the grocer at the next table.

"There!" she exclaimed triumphantly. "I know how to have fun too!"

I woke up from my musings on the past in Joe's Cellar. Joe is an Italian janitor who serves wine and beer, when he feels like it, after he comes home from work at 1:30 A.M. Lined with beer and wine barrels, ancient cobwebs, and yellowed newspaper clippings, the cellar contains two long tables covered with red oilcloth, around which everybody sits and plays Up Jenkins or Cardinal Puff. The green bottle of wine in its straw jacket, and platters of garlic salami pass from hand to hand, strangers become fast friends, and Joe, with rheumy eyes and faunlike ears, leans against a faded picture of Pola Negri and smiles, his gold tooth flashing in the flickering light of the gas flame.

Smitty was telling a story. The table was quiet, and even Joe, who doesn't understand much English, stepped forward to listen.

"She wuz an old blister of a ship," Smitty said, "and like I said, we had to lay up a day in this town in Norway for repairs. A kind of farmin' town, like, not much to it, and right on the sea.

"So, while we wuz there Holy Yensen up and dies. Holy

Yensen wuz the ship's carpenter, and nobody knows him very well becuz he was always readin' his Bible, see, and prophesyin' that we guys would come to no good end, as he usta say. Well, that was Holy Yensen, a tall, skinny old rooster, and he just took sick and died. Nobody knowed why.

"The old man tells us to build Yensen a coffin and to take him into the village and get him buried. None of us knows very much about carpentering, but somehow we manage to put together a box. But we'd forgot to measure Holy Yensen, and it seemed like he had shrunk, maybe, becuz when we got him in there he just rattled around—the coffin wuz too long. So we go to his cabin and find a lotta Bibles, and we take a coupla them and stuff them in at Holy Yensen's feet, to keep him from slippin'.

"Then we started lookin' for handles to carry the box by, but we couldn't find none on the ship. We told the old man about this, and he hems and haws, and finally he says, 'Well, boys, you can take two silver handles from my bureau and put them on the head and foot of the coffin. But don't forget to unscrew them before you bury him, and bring them back. I value them handles a lot.' He does, too; we all know how he admires that old bureau and them silver handles.

"So six of us sets out with Holy Yensen, and we walks around that little town, lookin' for a graveyard, only we don't see one. By this time the box is gettin' pretty heavy, and we have to stop in at a tavern to get back our strength. We have a few quick ones, then pick up the coffin from the street, and go on lookin'.

"Well, pretty soon one of the boys who can speak the lingo thinks to ask a old lady where is a graveyard. And she tells him there isn't any in this town, but there's one

in a town about a mile down the road. 'My God!' we all says, 'we can't carry Holy Yensen all that way!' So the old lady says she's got a wheelbarrow she'll sell us, only none of us want to spend our dough on a wheelbarrow, and besides we were all broke, except for a little grog money. So we step into another tavern to think it over.

"When we come out the old lady is still there, and she is lookin' at the silver handles on the coffin.

" 'Those are very nice handles,' she says.

" 'Yes,' we says, 'they are. But they belong to the captain, and we have to bring them back to him.'

" 'Well,' she says, turning away, 'it's a long walk to the next town.'

"We tell her to wait a minute, while we go back in the tavern and talk it over. In there we thinks to ourselves, here we are carryin' a heavy coffin all over town, just so our friend can have a decent burial. And the old man won't even give up one old bureau handle! After all, we says, he can put the one handle that's left in the middle of the drawer, and that'll be just as good—look kind of distinguished, maybe.

"So we have one more, and then we go back outside and bargain with the old lady, and finally she agrees that an old wheelbarrow is worth only one silver handle. So we follow along to her house and she gets the wheelbarrow and we unscrew the handle, and set off to the next town. We wuz feelin' so good to have Holy Yensen on wheels that we starts singin', and before we know it the next town is in sight, and we begin to think that at last we're goin' to get Holy Yensen buried.

"Well, right outside the town is a farmhouse, and it seems like there is some kind of shindig goin' on. There is a big wooden table in the space between the farm buildin's with



a bowl on it, and around the table a lot of pretty girls with yellow hair are dancin' folk dances with a lotta big yokels. That looks good to us, so we stop and watch, and after awhile the old farmer comes over and invites us to join the party. We tell him about Holy Yensen, and he says, 'That's all right. You can put the coffin under some hay in the barn, and it'll stay right there until you're ready to go.'

"So that's what we do. We get Holy Yensen tucked away under the hay in the barn, and then we go out and have some of the hot punch from the bowl (it was kinda strong, too), and we dance with the girls and make love to them a little when their fellows wuzn't lookin', and have some more punch, and all in all it was a bang-up party.

"We never could figure out how many hours we wuz there, but suddenly we notices that it is gettin' dark, and that everybody is leavin', and we think maybe we better get along, too. So we gets Holy Yensen out from under the hay, loads him on his wheelbarrow, and then one of the boys who had lived in Norway says: 'Say, we can't leave these nice people without givin' them a present in thanks.'

"'A present?' we asks.

"'Sure,' he says, 'it's a custom of the country.'

"So we look at each other, and, by Jesus, we had nothin' to give as a present—except the other silver handle. Well, we thinks, there is the old man, snug on his ship, never doin' nothin' for nobody, and here is this farmer with his wife and daughters, bein' so pleasant to us. The least the old man can give is an old bureau handle, when these people have been so generous to his crew!

"So we unscrews the handle and gives it to the farmer, who is very pleased, and off we went to the town. Finally we see a church, and we knock at the big house next to it.

A priest comes to the door, and we tell him about Yensen.

“Wuz he a Catholic?” he asks.

“For the life of us we don’t know what Holy Yensen wuz, so we just says that he wuz a very holy man, always singin’ psalms and prayin’.

“‘He can’t be buried here if he wuzn’t a Catholic,’ the priest says, and he shuts the door.

“Well, we keep on trundlin’ Holy Yensen down the street, stoppin’ off at only one tavern for a little refreshment. And by and by we come to a church, and we knock at the door of another big house. A stern-lookin’ young man comes to the door and we tell him about Holy Yensen.

“‘Wuz he a Protestant?’ he asks.

“For the life of us we still don’t know what Holy Yensen wuz, but we repeat that he wuz a very holy man, indeed, and that we think it is high time he is gettin’ buried.

“‘He can’t be buried here if he wuzn’t a Protestant,’ the man says, and he shuts the door.

“It was pitch black now, and the ship wuz supposed to sail at midnight. There are no more churches in the town, and we don’t know what to do. To help us think, we chip in what dough we have left, and one of the boys goes down the street and comes back with a case of beer. We put it on top of the coffin and wheel it around the corner. There we find a nice lawn, which we can see is at the back of the minister’s house.

“‘Well, boys!’ I say, after I have a long swallow of brew, ‘there is nothin’ to do but bury poor Holy Yensen right here.’ After all the lights go out in the minister’s house, I tiptoes back and finds a shovel leanin’ against a shed, and we set to work. We digs and digs, helpin’ our work along with the beer, and finally we have a hole big enough, and we put Holy Yensen in it. As there is a lot of space left,

we also put in the empty beer bottles and the case, and then we cover it all up, and we find some flowers and throw them on top, very proud that we had done such a neat job of buryin' Holy Yensen."

Smitty was silent for a moment, and his twinkling black eyes smiled at our attentive faces. He took a long swallow of beer and lighted his pipe.

"We told the old man we'd plumb forgotten to unscrew the silver handles," he said, "but it seems like he never did believe us."

## LETTUCE FOR THE LOTUS-EATER

EVERYONE told me I ought to get a job, yet I felt drugged with the honey of leisure, mesmerized by the universal concentration on lighthearted gaiety. I knew that in large doses it was poisoned honey, but, oh, dear, it was such fun being a butterfly for the first time in my life! My relatives were concerned, visiting friends from the East were scornful, and my parents seemed to be completely puzzled by my contented inertia. So was I.

"California is either a barfly's or a lotus-eater's paradise—or both," Dad wrote, "and I have never thought that you would stay there permanently—much as I love it, and much as I want to live there some day, when and if I have time for mere living.

"Anne Bremer, Albert Bender's cousin and a good artist, used to say that creative artists never could emerge there because of the lack of hard and honest critical standards. They had a flamboyant and overblown culture, exalting second-raters, and with all their surface sophistication, they had an ingrowing complacent insularity that made them sterile—that was Anne's idea.

"Of course, that's only part of the story. We know the charm and beauty of California. . . ."

But bicycling and sailing, modeling Pete's head in clay, wild salad and *café espresso* at the Pisa were powerful deterrents to job hunting, and I put it off from week to week. Had my capital held out I might still be a Telegraph Hill

butterfly. The strands of personal ambition had apparently been left behind when I slipped from my Eastern cocoon, but a diet of shredded wheat and lettuce has an equally potent effect in turning one's thoughts toward the nasty business of finding a job.

Hunched on my roller coaster of a bed one night, I contemplated my last ten dollars. Of course, I could apply for assistance from home, and I knew I'd get it in a minute, but it seemed to me I was getting a little old to be writing home for money.

I sighed and reread part of Dad's last letter: "I was just thinking of the hillbilly girl who went to a neighbor's cabin to borrow a hammer. When they asked what she wanted it for, she said, 'Pappy's goin' t' build him a house next fall.'

"The definite decision and the overt action naturally come after the definite plan. So make a plan, dear daughter—I know it isn't easy—and watch Pa and Ma provide a fast assist and a put-out."

O.K. That's the way it would be. Tomorrow Margaret returns to the community of the workers of the world. It shouldn't be hard. There are magazines in San Francisco, and I have worked on magazines in New York. There are newspapers, and publicity . . . radio . . . advertising—oh, Lord, no! Well, if worst comes to worst, yes.

Whistling, I hopped from the couch and pawed through a dusty box of letters, unfinished short-story manuscripts, newspaper clippings, and photographs, until I found the bundle of letters of introduction to various San Francisco big shots I had been saving for the dismal day when I would have to get a job. It didn't seem so dismal now.

It had been so long since I had dressed up that a wardrobe overhauling was in order. As I brushed the suede

shoes, washed the white cotton gloves, sewed the bottom button on the light blue suit, I happily bellowed out the old ballad Dad had picked up from some nostalgic Britisher during his boyhood in Colorado:

Weary and lame the poor boy came  
Unto the farmer's door. (brush, rub, brush)  
Can you tell me, if any there be  
Who can give to me employ? (oy, oy, oy)  
For to reap and sow, to plow and mow,  
And be a farmer's boy (oy, oy, water, suds, scrub)  
And to be (e, e) a farmer's boy?

Louder now: "And to be (e, e) a farmer's—" What's that banging noise? Seems to be out in the garden. If I didn't have these soapy wet gloves on, the door would be easier to open. Who? Oh, it's Val, the girl who lives down on the courtyard below me . . . most hospitable person in the world! Oh, could you hear me, Val? Didn't think I was singing that loudly. Oh, no, I'm sorry, I can't come down to a party now. I'm getting ready for a job tomorrow. No—I don't exactly have it, but I will. Thanks, though! As Val closes her window I hear the sound of laughter and music, and suddenly I weaken . . . after all, I could get a job on Tuesday instead of Monday, and Val's parties are such fun. . . .

The wind from my open garden door flutters Dad's letter from the couch, and I stare for a moment at the yellow copy paper. All right, I'm no dope. I can recognize the finger of God stirring my pudding! "O.K., farmer boy," I mutter, "here we come!" With renewed determination I plunge the gloves back into the suds.

The magazines came first on the list. There were three in San Francisco. One was a San Francisco imitation of *The*

*New Yorker* and only differed from other imitations by the fact that it was taking a little longer to die. A series of bright young men, some of whom I knew, had tried to keep it alive, and the last one, reputedly, had just lost \$100,000 on it. I had a letter to the new editor, and the prospects looked bright as I jerked upward in the prehistoric elevator which the janitor optimistically said would take me to the magazine's offices.

"You wish to become a member of our staff?" asked the charming new editor. When I indicated that that was the idea, he waved his arm around the tiny room where we were sitting. Three desks were jammed side by side, and an amused young man and pitying middle-aged woman turned from their perches to look at me.

"We are the staff," said the young editor. "There is no one else and no more room, and we work for love alone."

Gulp. Well, how about writing for them?

"We need short stories or anything else you write," he said, "but, of course, you understand we can't pay for anything—not yet, anyhow."

I understood. I departed.

The second magazine was one of the oldest in San Francisco, its name was mentioned in reverent whispers, and I never met anyone who had ever actually read it. I had lunch with a girl who did the movie reviews.

"You must get awfully sick of seeing so many movies," I remarked.

"Oh, I haven't seen a movie for years," she said innocently. "You see, the movie openings usually coincide with our deadline, so the office just has me rewrite the releases the press agents send out."

Oh, well, a job is a job. I welcomed her invitation to meet the managing editor. He listened politely to the recital

of my New York experience and matched the pads of his pink finger tips together as he gave me the brush-off.

"I'm afraid we couldn't use anyone from the East," he said. "Too sophisticated for our slow pace." A deprecatory smile. "And not enough background on the West, I'm afraid."

Oh, well. Maybe he's right. Good-by.

The third magazine was one of those home, garden, and recipe jobs, which ran an occasional boosting article on the Golden West. They also ran beautiful color photographs, but I didn't know anything about that.

"Now, what we need," said its editor, "is a series of little articles about the hobbies of well-known San Franciscans. Interviews in the garden, kitchen, and workshop, so to speak." I brightened.

"We could use one a month," he continued, "and we'd like it to be in the style of a superior E. B. White. No more than 1,500 words, and we pay half a cent a word."

Swift calculation. That would make \$7.50 a month. I'm good at living cheaply, but not that cheap! Good-by. Tomorrow is another day and tonight I will wash my gloves again. I should have gone to Val's party.

All right, if the magazines won't have me, I'll be a newspaperwoman. There are worse fates. And think of Nellie Bly and Dorothy Thompson. At a party on Twin Peaks, the refuge of artists and newspapermen who have been chased from Telegraph Hill by rising rents, I had met the editor of the Sunday section of one of the papers. A swell guy, a fine guy, especially when he agreed to talk to the paper's big shot about me.

"Are you by any chance related to Lem Parton?" the big shot asked. I admitted that I was his daughter.

"Well, well, think of old Lem having a grown daughter!



Used to work with Lem on lots of stories, great guy he was and a damned good reporter. Excuse me. A good man though. Your mother's a fine little woman, too. Like to do something for their daughter."

That sounded encouraging. I leaned forward expectantly from the old brown leather chair. But the big shot had retreated into the past.

"Never forget that yarn your Dad used to tell about Fremont Older and Arthur McEwen walking along the street by the Palace Hotel. An old bum panhandled them, and Arthur gave him two bits. As they walked on Fremont asked: 'Arthur, for God's sake, why did you give that bum any money? I know that booze hound and I know he's one of the undeserving.' Without a word Arthur wheeled around, caught up with the bum, and gave him another quarter. As he panted back to Older, he said: 'To be poor is tough but to be poor and undeserving—that must be hell!' Your Dad loved that story."

Yes, I know he did. I'd heard it often enough. But I laughed.

"Never forget covering the story of a murdered woman with old Lem! Bad section of town, out near the slaughterhouses, in a rickety old shanty. We got there together late at night, after an anonymous telephone tip. Police didn't even know yet. House apparently deserted, but a flicker of light on the top floor front. Climbed those stairs, eased along a dark corridor, went into a little room. There on the bed was the nakedest young girl you ever saw, with a candle burning on the floor beside her. Her hands were crossed over her chest and her throat was sliced from ear to ear.

"Well, sir, we stood there in that lonely house, in that lonely section of town, looking at the girl and neither of us

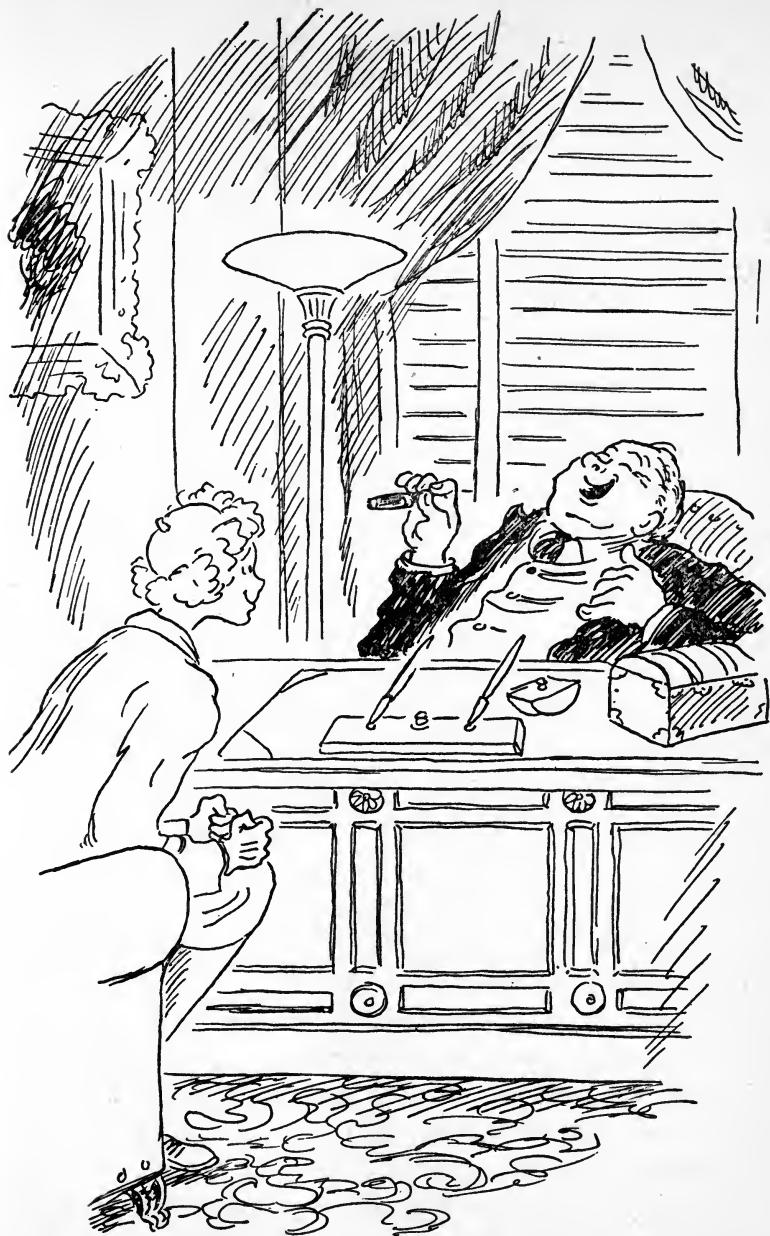
feeling too well. Suddenly Lem grabbed my arm and whispered, 'I hear someone coming!' And sure enough, I could hear the stairs creaking, and then a tiptoeing little noise down the hall. We stood there shivering, and outside the half-closed door it was so quiet we could hear someone breathing. And then, what do you think? The biggest black cat you ever saw padded into the room, waving its tail. It had green eyes, and it looked at us like it was the devil. Then, with a flex of its legs, it jumped right up on that corpse's bare stomach, and sat there, staring at us. Believe me, we got out of that place so fast we almost knocked the house down!"

Nervously I squashed out my cigarette, wondering if I *really* wanted to be a newspaperwoman. I'd forgotten that one.

"I'd certainly like to do something for Lem Parton's daughter," he said benignly. A secretary came into the room and whispered to him. He nodded and looked at his watch. I was leaning forward so eagerly now that I could have done a jackknife flip into his personnel records.

"Of course, there's nothing right now," he said. "Never is in the summer. But come back to see me in three or four months if you don't find anything."

I walked slowly down the corridor to the elevator and thoughtfully pushed the bell. Why had I thought he might give me a job in the first place? Being the daughter of an old friend didn't mean that I could cover even a one-alarm fire or a luncheon of the Rotary Club. And working on a couple of magazines in New York didn't necessarily equip me to write obituaries or movie reviews. Maybe he was a pretty good editor, after all. My estimation of myself went down faster and farther than the elevator did.



To comfort me, Pete took me that night out to Ocean Beach, the amusement park which fringes the seaward side of the San Francisco peninsula. We ate abalone steak at the Cliff House and from our window table watched the sea lions frolicking on Seal Rocks, 400 feet offshore, their sleek coats edged with gold from the setting sun. It was good to eat again, and digging into half a persimmon, its orange center filled with cream, I could even laugh when Pete suggested I take up tightrope walking as a profession.

"It would be magnificent!" Pete said enthusiastically. "Why, right here, between the old Cliff House and Seal Rocks, a couple of acrobats strung up a tightrope about sixty years ago and made a fortune walking back and forth. I bet you could do it. I'd be your manager and we'd make a tremendous splash!"

"That's what I'm afraid of. . . ."

After dinner we walked through the amusement park, stopping occasionally at a penny arcade or a shooting gallery. I was so depressed about the job situation that my hands shook, and I had to switch from the moving ducks to the stationary squirrels, which I had outgrown years ago. It was humiliating, and even two rides on the shoot-the-shoots didn't help. So we drove to Robert's, where the light is dim, the orchestra plays softly, and the drinks are soothing. Pete was full of ideas for my welfare, and as we danced he poured them out.

"We'll go down to the Big Sur and get us a ranch," he said. "There's plenty of room down there to raise horses in. (Excuse me, I didn't mean to trip you.) And we'll raise horses and maybe have a progressive school on the side. Isn't that a wonderful idea?"

"I'm afraid of horses. One of them bit me as an infant and I've never gotten over it."

Pete was incredulous. "You don't like horses?" To hear him talk you'd think he was half centaur.

"I didn't say that. In my next incarnation I want to be a stable hand or a jockey, and to know all about hocks and withers and the smell of manure. But right now I'm afraid of them. And as for progressive schools, I went to one, and I know I couldn't stand the kind of rough handling now that we kids gave our teachers. So that's out."

"So did I go to one," Pete said. "I used to toss bombs at the English teacher, right in class. (Sorry, I thought this was a rumba.) Oh, they were just little homemade ones and didn't do much damage. . . . Just blew the inkwell off the desk, and things like that. But they certainly made her hop!"

Nice boy. A perfect illustration of Carmel influence.

"Well, if horses and schools are out," he persisted, "you could always breed great Danes. They're nice."

"I'd rather breed silver dollars. They're nicer."

The dogged job hunt started again in the morning and continued until Saturday night. And by the end of the week the farmer boy in the ballad wasn't the only one who was weary and lame. The bottom button was off the blue suit again, the gloves had been washed five times more, and by careful starving I had managed to hold out two silver dollars and a heap of nickels and dimes from the original ten dollars. It made a comfortable handful, and as I sat on the couch, weighing it soberly, I blessed the California dislike of paper money, inherited from the gold dust days.

All my interviews had been duplicates of the first ones, and everywhere I had met surprise and masculine amusement. The jobs I was asking for, some of the interviewers told me, were for men. In San Francisco women were ex-

pected to be efficient secretaries, and it was unusual if they aspired to anything else. I had already discovered that attitude among the girls I had met on Telegraph Hill. They were intelligent, educated, capable human beings, but prejudice and custom had forced them to bury their initiative in a notebook of pothooks. At night they discussed merchandising and Mozart and the war in Europe and T. S. Eliot. But in the daytime they transcribed "Yours of the 5th received—" with perfect equanimity and called themselves career women.

Bedamned to that!

Another trouble, I thought, was that I had forgotten what a really small city San Francisco was. It was an exquisite miniature of New York, in which New York's manifold culture was reproduced in perfect and reduced detail. One or two good department stores instead of a dozen. Two theaters. Three good museums. One ballet season. Four newspapers. And, naturally, fewer jobs. For general purposes of living and enjoyment, I liked the smaller scale, where you weren't confused by being offered too much. But for the purposes of someone who wanted to be on the inside, it had its dreary aspects.

I forced myself to admit the truth. Given the two factors, the comparative scarcity of good jobs and the prejudice against women, any woman who wanted one of those good jobs had to have something startling on the ball to get it. And she'd have to be a lot more skillful about going after it. In New York it was different, but out here. . . . I had failed on two counts.

I ran the warm silver through my fingers and, still holding it in my damp hands, walked over to the window and looked at the bay. The water was black, crisscrossed by

the shimmering tracery of lights from the bridge. Beyond the channel two ships rocked gently at anchor, their outline shadowy in the glow from the rising moon. Far across the bay the lights of Berkeley twinkled large and brilliant through the clear Western air.

I DO not know who the hellcats are who run employment agencies, but I am sure that they came from the womb spitting and clawing. Just as I can never understand why a young man would decide on undertaking as a career, I can never understand why almost all employment agents are insolent, disparaging, beady-eyed, middle-aged females—or why they invariably wear their hats in the office. If a woman wears her hat in the office it always indicates to me that she's either very rich and is just volunteering, or that she's the executive type and wants you to know that she gets a big salary. Or else she's an employment agent.

I had walked into their offices in New York and crawled out under the door. It was the same in San Francisco, only I didn't even have to leave. I just evaporated with humiliation, leaving a slight moisture on their faces and an echo of hissing in their ears.

Name?

Date of birth?

Address and telephone?

Manual skills?

Experience?

Well, I thought, I was luckier than the poor little gals who can't get a job without experience and who can't get experience without a job. I listed the radio station where I had handled the news programs; the research work for



The Institute for Propaganda Analysis; *Liberty* and *True Story* magazines, for which, Lord help me, I had been a publicity assistant; a year's work on the editorial staff of *The New Yorker*. It's terrible to be restless when you're lucky.

Sharp eyes dart over the record, then switch to you, dig under your fingernails, behind your ears. You suddenly remember the ogre who taught the fourth grade and held morning hygiene inspections. You feel like sitting down, but you are not invited. There is perspiration on your forehead, but you forgot to bring a clean handkerchief.

"All your experience was in New York?"

"Yes. Yes, it was."

"Hmf! Well, you'll find we don't have the fancy jobs out here that you're accustomed to."

Let it pass. Westerners resent what they call "New York chi-chi."

"Can you operate a switchboard?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"A dictaphone?"

"I could probably learn." She looks as if she didn't think so.

"You say you're a writer, so you probably can't really typewrite." It is a flat statement, and you are put in the position of ejaculating, "I can, too!" which sounds petulant, or saying nothing at all. You are silent.

"No shorthand, of course." It is another assumption, and you greet it with another apologetic silence. She looks over the record again and sighs.

"Well, I'm afraid you really don't have anything to offer an employer," she says.

You ooze out, thinking that, after all, she's probably right. And she can't get you a job that isn't there.

That was the pattern at the five agencies I doggedly visited in the next two days. But at the sixth I ran into luck. In a cool and spacious room in an historic Market Street office building, the sixth employment agent wasn't wearing her hat, and she wasn't wearing her shoes, either. In keeping with the others she had an imposing superstructure, and her eyes were sharp, but she smiled at me when I came in, and she gestured almost languidly at her stockinged feet.

"It's so hot," she said. It was—for San Francisco. Almost sixty-five in the sun. The mean annual temperature, by the way, is 56.4° F. If it ever gets up to eighty all the offices close.

So I sat down and unburdened my soul, and after a while she went out to get cokes from the machine in the hall.

"Poor child," she said, handing me a straw, "you have been having a time, haven't you?"

I still clutched a silver dollar, but I knew enough to be honest when luck and desperation met.

"Look," I said, "there's something I haven't told you, or anyone else. The fact is that one summer when I didn't have much else to do except think about a guy who wasn't in love with me, I went to secretarial school. Frustrated passion drove me to it, so to speak, but somehow I did learn shorthand. I've never had to use it in any of my jobs, but I'm still pretty fast. I've been practicing with the radio."

She perked up considerably. "In that case," she said, "I think I have a job for you. As a kind of editorial assistant to a man who writes motion pictures and plays. But you'd have to take a few letters in shorthand, now and then. Thirty a week."

Hallelujah, Eureka, and Praise to the Gods of Working Women!

"There's just one thing," she said, hesitantly. "This man

is a little, er, eccentric. I've sent him five girls in the past two months, and none of them has quite, er, worked out. So he's asked me to send any potential employee to his wife for the preliminary interview."

Seeing my expression, she added hastily, "Oh, it's quite all right. It's just that you might run into a little artistic temperament."

And what was the name of this eccentric genius?

"Satterthwaite Hopkins Wallingford. A very old California family.

Sounded more like a train announcer for the Media, Wawa, Westchester local. And I might as well say right here that Satterthwaite Hopkins Wallingford was not his real name. But the real name did sound exactly like a series of Pennsylvania railroad stations.

The next morning, as I trotted down the hill toward the streetcar which would take me to my interview with Mrs. Wallingford, I was wafted along by a mixture of apprehension and elation. "Keep your lipstick on straight," the fantastically human employment agent had said. Well, it was on straight. "Don't be scared," she had said. Well, I was scared.

I needn't have been. Mrs. Wallingford, who lived with her husband in a sprawling house and garden on the sea side of Russian Hill, was Spanish. One of those charming "put-you-at-ease" internationalists, she seated me on the deep couch in the living room, produced a glass of dry sherry, and for half an hour chattered inconsequentially about the swimming at Cannes, the tennis at Deauville, and the personal idiosyncrasies of King Alfonso. During all of this I relaxed and studied her opaque dark eyes, her olive skin, and her petulant mouth, with the lipstick painted into two sharp points on top. Her lips looked, somehow, like

those of the movie queens of the 1920's. But her face was young and carefully masked.

At the end of half an hour she asked me one or two questions about myself. Then she bit her fingernails for a second and studied me.

"You will do," she said. "You will be perfec' for my husban'. But, of course, he must approve you first." She asked me to wait in the garden and in a few moments she came out with a slip of paper.

"He will see you now," she said. "Here is his address. It is the apartment where he works." She said good-by to me with a look of sympathy on her face.

The cable car dipped sharply down Hyde Street toward the bay, and I skidded forward on the long open-air seat. The sidewise seats of the cable cars are almost the gayest of San Francisco institutions, and the chamber of commerce or Californians, Inc., should make every effort to encourage the proverbial wit of cable car conductors, who for decades have been accustomed to commenting wryly on passing points of interest. In the old days, when the California cable car climbed Nob Hill and passed the ostentatious pile of marble which was the fabulous Mark Hopkins residence, the conductors used to drawl: "All out for the Hopkins' boardin' house!" In my day, passing the same spot, where the towering Mark Hopkins Hotel now stands, the gripmen sometimes modernized the chant in references to the striking hotel employees who for months marched up and down in front of the hotel's driveway. "Anybody wanta go through the picket line?" they would bawl belligerently.

But today I was on the Hyde Street car, rocketing downhill and remembering Gelett Burgess' *Ballad of the Hyde Street Grip*:

Rush her at the crossings, catch her on the rise,  
Easy round the corners when the dust is in your eyes!

No dust in my eyes today—but maybe stars, if Mr. Wallingford agrees with his wife. I climbed off the car at Bay Street and easily spotted the garden entrance to the three-story wooden apartment house Mrs. Wallingford had described. On the mailbox an engraved card proclaimed: "The Workshop of Satterthwaite Hopkins Wallingford."

Inside, at the head of a long flight of stairs, stood a stocky individual who looked like a dignified wrestler.

"Mr. Wallingford?"

"I am Mr. Wallingford's man," he reproved. Humbly I told him who I was, and he disappeared to make my presence known to the master. Behind the closed door at the end of the hall I heard a murmur of voices, then a series of little thumps, and a resounding crash. "Jee-ames!" a querulous voice screamed. "Tear that blankety instrument out from the wall. It attacks me every time I fall down. Immediately! And bring the young person in."

James, completely unruffled, but carrying in one hand a telephone with a trailing length of cord, emerged from the room and indicated that I would now be received.

Although outside the day was a glorious blue and gold, the heavy curtains in Mr. Wallingford's living room were drawn almost closed, with only a slit to show a glimpse of terrace outside. Electric lights behind brown parchment shades burned dimly through the clouds of cigarette smoke which filled the room. The smoke was exotic, pungent, Turkish. I choked and my eyes watered. Suddenly, through the heavy blue layers a yellow claw emerged. The fingernails were long and curved, dyed ochre with nicotine. Shuddering, I shook it briefly.



The claw flailed the air to dissipate some of the smoke, then moved to the curtains, and opened them a few inches. The voice that went with the claw spoke at last.

"My dear," it said, "it was so utterly charming of you to come. I do need help so desperately."

"Not at all. . . ."

The claw moved the curtains a few more inches, and a withered face loomed through the smoke. Small bright eyes with puffed pink lids above them stared at me.

"Why," he said finally, "you look like Kit, don't you?"

"Kit?"

"Cornell." Impatiently. A shrug of the thin shoulder. I should have known. I'll bluff it through if he does that again. He didn't though—he only indicated a green leather chair, which I gratefully took, and stood before the fireplace, staring at me.

"Jee-ames!" he shouted suddenly, startling me almost out of the chair. James appeared silently amid the smoke. "Air the room, James!" A door was opened from the terrace, and in a few moments the smoke began to thin. A few moments more and Mr. Wallingford emerged as reality, although that word never exactly applied to him.

He was of medium height and slender build. A fringe of pink hair half circled his bald head. On his narrow face quivered an aristocratic nose, and beneath it was a pouting little mouth—the soft wet lips of a spoiled child. His ears were pointed, and red-rimmed Harlequin glasses increased the pixy effect. He wore soft brown tweeds and a yellow ascot.

"My wife tells me you come from the East," he began. "Fascinating place, fascinating. If I didn't have the obligations of an old California family and all that sort of thing, I'd certainly live in New York. Stay somewhere quiet like

the Brevoort, lunch with Kit or Helen at the Algonquin. . . .”

Helen? Oh, Hayes, probably.

After a while I was allowed to tell him where I had worked. He clasped his wrinkled claws in ecstasy.

“Oh, my dear!” he cried. “How clever you are to have worked in such fascinating places. . . . I’m afraid you’ll find me terribly dull.”

He retired suddenly into a melancholy dream, and I seized the chance to examine the room. A round table against the window. Two soft green chairs. A couch by the fireplace, and beyond that a bookcase. The titles in gold stood out: *The Decameron. Poetica Erotica*. Oh, dear. But I do need a job, and I can keep my nails filed sharp. As I contemplated the bookcase the words superannuated satyr sprang into my mind. It was very rude of me, particularly as I had no proof that he was a satyr and I never could remember exactly what superannuated meant anyway.

Against one wall I saw the telephone box with its trailing length of cord. I learned later that there was something wrong with Mr. Wallingford’s center of equilibrium, and he couldn’t walk five steps without lurching and knocking something over. The unfortunate object was invariably banished from his presence until he forgot about it, and then James restored it to its accustomed place.

“You couldn’t start to work right now?” he asked wistfully.

Don’t be a mouse. Stand on your rights. Besides, you’re hungry. “No, I’m afraid not till tomorrow,” I answered. Gratefully, I saw that he took it well.

“Jee-ames!” he shouted, and James emerged from behind two folding doors leading to a tiny kitchenette. “A bottle of champagne, James.”



Fascinated, I watched the golden bubbles cascading into the thin glasses. My new employer's arm shook as he steadied himself against the table, and half the liquid spilled onto the table. He whipped a silk handkerchief from his pocket and clumsily began to mop up, while I barely restrained myself from climbing under the table to catch the streams that were pouring onto the rug. I tried hard to remember the two or three times in my life when I had had champagne. I have always wanted to drink it out of a pink satin slipper but I don't suppose I ever will. Somehow, women don't.

He lifted his glass with a gesture that was pure Monsieur Beaucaire. I could almost see the white lace at the wrist, the smooth silk over the delicate calf.

"*À tes beaux yeux,*" he simpered. "And to our mutual success!" My response was shaky, to say the least.

Dismissing me, he indicated his characteristic sympathy with the problems of womanhood. "Run along, my dear, and buy a hat or marcel your hair, or whatever it is you mysterious women do at times like these."

Instead I danced home and borrowed \$5 from Val on the strength of a sure-fire pay check to come, bought a gallon of white wine and a pound of salami, and telephoned everyone I knew to come right over.

They came, they drank, they listened to the description of my afternoon with a satyr, and they laughed. But they didn't believe a word of it.

COME to think of it, no one ever believed all the tales of Mr. Wallingford that I brought home during the next two months. I found the stories rather incredible myself, but I ascribed that to my unfamiliarity with the mores of the millionaire set.

I found out about the millionaire angle, and a lot more too, from the ancient clips Pete's brother Charles unscrupulously brought me from the files of the newspaper where he worked. Clipping by clipping, gasp by gasp, we followed the life of Satterthwaite Hopkins Wallingford as the disintegrating folder revealed it. Here, in high collar and pointed shoes, was the dashing young bachelor of 1910, pictured at a cotillion at the Palace Hotel. A clipping, a year later: "Satterthwaite Hopkins Wallingford inherits \$2,000,000 from grandfather." A story that the young squash champion had lately taken up automobile racing and in society circles was achieving a reputation as a speed demon, claiming that he had actually gone as fast as thirty-five miles an hour.

Here, too, was a polite little review of young Wallingford's first book: *Play, Prattle, and Playland*, a collection of society epigrams, privately printed for San Francisco's four hundred. In 1918 there was a big story when our hero went off to war, complete with a history of all the Hopkinses and Wallingfords who had fought before for their country. Three months later there was a tiny paragraph about Mr. Wallingford's release from the Army—flat feet. Undeterred

by this disability, the most eligible bachelor in San Francisco, as he was then known, was finally taken to husband by, of course, the most eligible debutante. Here indeed were headlines to prove it.

All the clippings for the next ten years concerned Mr. Wallingford's marital difficulties. Divorce, a second marriage. Divorce, a third marriage. Divorce, and after a cagey wait of several years, a fourth marriage to the Spanish girl, in France. One of these wives, I remember, was known as the first society woman in San Francisco to bob her hair. There was no issue from any of the marriages.

And now here was Satterthwaite Hopkins Wallingford, fifty-one years old and looking seventy, in the hands of a business manager who doled him his allowance, which, because of alimony payments, was nothing like the allowance that had whetted the multimillionaire tastes of his youth. And here was Satterthwaite Hopkins Wallingford, scorned by his beautiful young wife, limited by his doctor to champagne and sherry, and possessed of a furious desire to be a successful writer.

During the First World War a little art theater in New York had presented one of his plays, which ran for a week. Another, an historical romance of old California, had recently been produced by a student group at Leland Stanford University. He had a scrapbook for each production containing views of the stage from every conceivable angle, pictures of himself and the director, and special programs printed on parchment.

His only other effort which had seen daylight was a collection of short stories, printed in England by a publishing house partly subsidized by Mr. Wallingford's family. It was called *Tainted Cherubs*, a title which caused me a great deal of trouble with my friends on Telegraph Hill. Many

of them seemed to think the title applied to me after a few weeks' association with Mr. Wallingford.

The play I was to help on had already been written once and was now in the process of revision. The story, laid in the courtyard of an inn somewhere in the West Indies, concerned Audrey and Joren, the volatile innkeeper and her high-tempered pastry cook. Jewel-dripping refugees and penniless princes were also tied in somehow. I have forgotten all the lines and situations, but I will never forget the title page. *Piccalilli Sauce*, it read, *written by Mr. Blank and Mrs. Blanket*.

If only Mr. Wallingford had maintained a consistent literary quality of hopeless lousiness, it might have been all right. I could have kidded him along with a clear conscience and laughed the whole thing off. But unfortunately he had a certain facility for frothy dialogue and a real sense of farce, and if only he had had a glimmering of an idea or a theme to back up the dialogue he might have turned out one of those frivolous and amusing farces of the 1920's. And so, for awhile, I took his work seriously and was as brutally frank as I dared to be. He protested at every change, we bickered for hours over a line, or even a word, but in the end he usually adopted my suggestions, and after two weeks he raised my salary.

Somehow he always made me think of Dad's story of old man Cupfer and old man Payne, a couple of bent and wheezy octogenarians who lived in Fresno, California, many years ago. Mr. Cupfer, a spry and opinionated old gentleman, ran a little weekly paper which he kicked out on a Washington hand press and toted around town in a basket. As his paper didn't go through the mails he enjoyed complete freedom in the picturesque denunciation of anyone he didn't like. He made the most of it.

Mr. Payne was Mr. Cupfer's Boswell. His pockets were stuffed with clippings from the paper, and he regarded its editor as the greatest literary figure ever produced in America.

One day old man Cupfer decided to take a swing at Chester Rowell, then the brilliant and liberal owner of the *Fresno Republican*. In boxcar type, clear across the top of his front page he put the streamer: "CHESTER ROWELL IS A — — — — —."

Old man Payne, trembling with excitement as he always did when the paper came out, put on his spectacles and lovingly read the dashes backward and forward. His face was ecstatic as he read it over again.

"My goodness," he cackled, "that man Cupfer is certainly a powerful writer!"

Mr. Wallingford was one of those people who need to bolster their insecurity with ever-present reminders of their identity. It seemed to me that everything in the flat was monogrammed—the cigarettes, the matches, the pencils, the china and glasses, the piano. SHW even greeted me in the bathroom, where six different types of manicure scissors and various orange sticks and nail buffs were neatly ranged on the monogrammed towel, freshly changed each day. SHW on the bath mat, the laundry hamper, the tissue box container, and even on the top of the toilet. The bathroom, by the way, contained a full line of women's cosmetics, several bottles of exotic perfume, and boxes and boxes of "the pills."

Aunt Flora, who had known Mr. Wallingford for years, warned me that society rumors indicated his addiction to drugs. "The pills," which he screamed for whenever he was tired and which seemed to revive him miraculously,

couldn't really be called confirmations of her rumors, so I just ignored the whole question. It was none of my business as long as he behaved, and James was always at hand. Besides, I was enjoying myself.

Aunt Flora also reported that Mr. Wallingford had pushed his last secretary down the long flight of stairs and had broken her right arm. I resolved to stay away from the head of the stairs when he was in a bad mood.

Mr. Wallingford was a fetishist. I learned on my first day with him that paper clips were sacred. So, too, were rubber erasers, pencils, stationery, script books, and typewriter ribbons. All scripts must be typed with the speeches in alternating green and black ink because, to Mr. Wallingford's eye, the effect was startling and amusing. If a script was neatly enough typed and the green and black inks were the right shades, it couldn't fail to sell. To be sure, the steel file in the office room was choked with exquisitely presented scripts and manuscripts, but we didn't talk about that. The new script would be even more exquisitely typed and spaced, and naturally producers would grab at it, and I would be given 40 per cent of the sale price and a ticket to opening night.

Almost all this paraphernalia of writing and selling and living had to be specially ordered from New York. Or London. Ties from Sulka, suits from his British tailor, individually blended cigarettes from "a wonderful little man on lower Broadway," personal stationery (engraved *The Workshop*) from Tiffany, and books from Brentano's. (He never read, but he liked to have the new novels around. When I would ask to borrow one he would sigh, "Oh, how clever you are!")

Whenever he decided that there were only seven reams of stationery left and that he ought to get seventeen more

or that he needed another gross of cigarettes, we would go through a morning of agony. Should the cigarettes be tipped with silver paper, or gold? Did I like the copper color of the match folders, or was it better to harmonize with the cigarette silver? Did I think producers were more impressed by long, narrow stationery, or would the common, garden-variety size indicate that although he was Satterthwaite Hopkins Wallingford, he wished to be judged entirely on his merits?

It was unthinkable that any of these things\* could be ordered directly. The method of ordering a new dressing gown, for instance, was involved and fraught with tension.

"My dear, would you mind terribly taking a letter?"

"Not at all, Mr. Wallingford."

"Are your pencils sharp enough? Let me see. Jee-ames! Sharpen these for Miss Parton, please. I wonder if the sharpener is sharp enough. Perhaps I had better go see. Well . . . if you say so. Thank you, James. Now, where was I? Are you comfortable? Do you like those green lines on your pad or would you rather have red? All right, now, let's see. . . .

"Dear Lynn (you'll find the address of the theater in that little blue book on the right-hand side of my desk. Oh, the play hasn't opened yet? My dear, how do you ever find time to know all the things you know? Well, send it to the Algonquin). Dear Lynn—my darling moonbane. No, change that to my darling moon of the Caribbean. This penitent petitioner is hard at work on your play, and it shall delight thine heart with glory—no, say joy—and it shall please you for a ne'er-do-well—(oh, is it fare do well? Thank you—paragraph.) Sweet imp (no, impress), would'st mind performing an unforgettable favor for this miserable resident of a benighted and beautiful outland? Would'st run over to

Sulka's and pick out a dressing gown for this ragged wretch? Something silk or foulard, in yellow perhaps, so that I may be inspired by the sunbeam of thy (no, say your, don't want to sound silly) impeccable taste. My thanks I shall carry ever with me, yea, even across the river Styx. (Make three dots there and space them one space apart.) Dear Goddess, I am ever your adoring—(you can stop there, I'll sign it)."

These letters were usually rewritten twice, after they had been typed and presented for inspection, and then the large scrawl, Rosy, was dutifully inscribed. This nickname, which apparently was derived from the color of Mr. Wallingford's hair, fascinated me, and it was all I could do not to use it.

After the letter was mailed (special delivery and air-mail, of course), there followed an anxious period, in which concentration on "Lynn's play" was hourly interrupted by indulgent oaths in the direction of the harassed actress and acrimonious discussions of Sulka's inefficiency. Finally, when all our nerves seemed to be twining like spaghetti, the package would arrive, and James and Rosy would disappear into the little bedroom, with its silver-framed photographs and its yellow silk bed sheets. In a few moments I would hear squeals of unhappiness from Mr. Wallingford and murmurs of reassurance from James, and a second later my volatile employer, his face mottled with distress, would burst from the bedroom.

"How could that creature do this to me!" he would scream, plucking at what I thought was a very handsome yellow robe. "I specifically said canary yellow silk, and she sends me this hideous mustard foulard!"

"You didn't mention the shade," I would remind him.

He wouldn't even hear me, and with snorts of frustration the robe would be bundled back into the package and re-



turned to Mr. Sulka. And for the next two days letters of recrimination and abuse would occupy our entire time. "Apparently you are not aware of who I am," was the usual opening for a letter to an offending merchant. "Unless you very quickly achieve a recognition of my power and position and learn to serve me accordingly, I shall be forced to bring the full effect of my position to bear toward the eventual failure of your establishment."

To help me keep my temper I used to carry around with me a little piece Dad had written about his early days as a reporter: "I was proud of being a big-town reporter—talked underworld lingo, called powerful politicians by their first names, packed a gun which I had obtained from the police department property clerk, and remarked on occasion, 'I'll break that so-and-so.' Checking on this in later years, I never did break anybody or anything and never could."

Neither could Rosy, and as far as I know, he never really tried to. He did, however, pack a gun. Or possibly guns.

One day, when we were celebrating the completion of Act II of "Lynn's play," with glasses of very old, very dry sherry, he broke a flow of theatrical reminiscences with the customary "Jee-ames!"

"James, where are my guns?"

"In the gun cabinet at home, sir."

"Go get them immediately and clean and oil them." He looked positively ferocious. I stared at him apprehensively and mentally retraced the last few hours. Had I really angered him when I insisted that Audrey's "pregnancy song" in Act II was vulgar? I didn't think he'd resort to shooting just for that. Well, let him try to get through Act III without me!

"Mexico," he said briefly, as James departed.

"Mexico?"

"Yes. I've decided we'll drive there when we finish the play. Spend the winter in Mexico City and get background for a movie script."

"Er . . . we?"

"Of course. I always take a secretary when I travel."

Oh. Well, how about the guns? He shrugged impatiently.

"Bandits. You always have to go armed in Mexico. To the teeth. But you'll be safe—I'm a good shot."

So am I, I thought belligerently. And I could knock you over with a water gun. And if you ever get me into a car headed toward Mexico I'll do it!

I didn't need to. What with one thing and another the nearest we ever got to Mexico was the Xochimilco Bar, where Rosy drank tequila and hired a sinister guitarist to write music for the play. As for the guns, James just quietly forgot about them.

LUCILE drifted into my shack one day and stayed for six months. When Vicky Pike brought her to one of my first parties, I thought her a charming child—shy, naïve, untouched by the rigors of a working world. Several months later, when she dropped in for tea, the impression was only reinforced by her halting little voice and her floating black hair which always seemed to be falling in front of her downcast eyelashes.

Lucile's father was an immensely rich lawyer in Sacramento, and she had grown up among the legislators in the state capital. After her mother died, she presided demurely at her father's dinner parties, but one day she read a book or saw a picture—I never knew quite what happened—and lit out for San Francisco. I think she must have blackmailed her father on one of his political deals, for after much protesting he finally agreed to supply her with money for a year of art study. So here she was, with a shiny wooden paintbox filled with round little tubes of crimson madder and burnt sienna, a sheaf of fresh brushes—and nowhere to stay.

So Lucile moved in, and we started keeping accounts in pencil on the kitchen's white wall. Anything she bought for the house she totaled under her name, and anything I bought went under mine. Every few weeks we added them up, and the one who had contributed the least paid the other one half of the difference. We were never quite sure

that the system was fair, but it seemed to work out all right, and we were happy.

I liked having a roommate. Lucile wrote delicate and subtle poetry, and after a while she showed me some of it with shy excitement, and that night we sat up till four in the morning, talking about Keats and Josephine Miles and Donne and Wilfred Owen. Another good thing about having a roommate is that it keeps a wolf from coming through the door with you when he brings you home from an evening on the town. Provided you have a one-room apartment, that is. If she's home, dressed, and with the lights on, there's nothing much he can do but say hello and go home. If she's in bed, with the lights off, he has to say good night on the porch and tiptoe away. And if she isn't home and the house is dark, you can still peer into the dim room (maintaining a firm clutch on the doorknob) and then whisper, "Sh . . . Lucile's asleep! I'm afraid I can't ask you in."

Lucile never seemed to be surprised at anything—even her own imagination. It was Lucile who invented our bowling game—ten empty soda-pop bottles and a cantaloupe, and she was a genius at devising weird arrangements for the costume parties which are the delight of most San Franciscans. Her concoctions always topped mine, without any apparent effort on her part.

For one party I got some papier-mâché Chinese snakes, curling on a string from a little stick, let down my hair and tied on the sticks. White powder, green eyeshadow, a sheet draped around me, and I was a Chinese Medusa . . . emerging from the bathroom I saw Lucile, standing naked in the center of the room, looking vague.

"My goodness," I said, "we have to go in ten minutes! What are you going to wear?"

"I don't know . . . I'll think of something."

She pawed through her closet and finally pulled out a pair of pale blue slacks.

"I guess I'll put these on," she said helplessly.

A few minutes more of desultory pawing and she emerged with a highly transparent chiffon jacket of pale orange. She slipped into it.

"Aren't you going to wear a bra, or anything?"

She smiled a little and almost blushed.

"I always think nudity is kind of amusing—besides, those boys at Christina's won't mind—if they notice."

Fascinated, I watched her get a roll of cotton batting from the bottom drawer and fluff it around her narrow waist. A clump of cotton went on her head. With a bottle of red ink she delicately daubed the cotton, then absorbedly started searching the room.

"Ah . . ." She unwrapped the silver tin foil from a package of cigarettes, pleated it into a fan shape, and tucked it into the top of her jacket.

"I'm ready now," she said, innocently.

"Lucile, what in God's name are you supposed to be?"

"Why, can't you tell? It's very simple . . . the blue pants are the sea. The orange jacket is the sun. The cotton is clouds, and the silver paper is a silver lining. So I am 'the sun setting beyond the sea behind sunlit clouds with a silver lining.' It's very simple." Her dignity crumpled and she giggled.

She was the hit of the party, of course.

For a full month Lucile painted feverishly. She came home every day from the California School of Fine Arts daubed with blues and grays and oranges, reeking of turpentine and oil. Then one day she decided she wanted to

dance. She had conceived the idea, she said, while flying the kite. Our kite was a beauty—one of the Chinese ones, not a butterfly, but a big green fish. We used to take it out in the moonlight and watch it dip and rise over the moonpath across the bay. . . . But this time a sudden tug of wind had pulled the kite from Lucile's hand, and as she chased the trailing string down Union Street, she said she had made an involuntary pirouette, or maybe it was an *entre-chat*, but, anyway, she had soared through the air and had realized that she should be a dancer, not a painter.

"Oh, and by the way," she said, "I needed a new tail for the kite so I used that old pink nightgown of yours. I'm afraid it's gone now . . . the kite flew right over the Treasure Island Naval Station, so I expect the boys there have it . . . just think how happy you must have made them!"

Anyway, Lucile stopped painting and started taking lessons in modern dancing.

Down at Val's one night I met a sly and oily sailor, not at all like the nice boys from the *West Wind*. As I remember, he talked all evening about the fabulous amount of money he could make if he could only import six girls into Hawaii for three weeks' work. I left early, but one night a week later he dropped by. He had a taxi outside, he said, with two of his friends and their girls. Wouldn't I like to join them? I said no, I had the measles, or some equally plausible excuse, and treacherously suggested that he take Lucile along. They looked each other over, not very happily, and finally went out together. I heard laughter and squeals from the taxi and had a momentary qualm about Lucile.

I was asleep at one in the morning when she came in, but she plumped down on the foot of my bed and woke me. I could see her gray eyes, wide in the dim room.

"Oh, Margaret," she said, "it was terrible! Those other women, do you know what they were? They were—prostitutes!" She whispered the word, not with horror, but with amazement.

"I wouldn't have minded except that they wore tight black satin skirts and red sequin jackets and hats with black plumes, and we went to Finnochio's and had a table out where everybody could see us, including all of Father's friends who go there. And they had frizzy yellow hair and I found out those boys had picked them up on a street corner just before they came up here. They were all drunk except your friend—"

"He isn't my friend!"

"Well, Ed then . . . and they kept pawing each other right at table and making mean remarks about my being a nice girl, and Ed and I just sat there stiffly, and finally he said to his friends"—she giggled.

"Maybe I shouldn't tell you this, but one of his friends whispered to him: 'Why didn't you bring a girl that was more fun?' and he whispered back: 'I intended to bring Margaret—she's more of a woman, sort of.' Wasn't that funny?"

I didn't think it funny at the time.

Ed didn't know how much of a woman there was in Lucile. And neither did I, for quite a while. Then, one day, I went away for the week end and came back rather early Monday morning to get ready for a new working week with Mr. Wallingford. Lucile was having breakfast in bed, and a yellow-haired boy with bloodshot eyes was sharing it with her.

I stood there, looking at them, wondering whether to

retreat or not. Lucile put down her coffee cup and smiled shyly.

"Oh, it's all right," she said, "we're in love."

That was Hector. They were in love for about a month, and being the accommodating soul I am, I went out of town for a lot of week ends, and sometimes stayed down at Val's or over at Leanore's. Then one day I came in and found her in bed with someone else. A fiery boy this time, with brown hair and fierce teeth.

"He fought for the Loyalists in Spain," Lucile explained.

That was Erik. Luckily he had an apartment of his own.

Erik lasted six weeks, and after that came Pat, who was "such a wonderful labor organizer," and Jeffrey, who came from "a fine old New Orleans family," and Frank, a dancer Lucile met in one of her classes.

"It's so good for Frank to have normal relations," Lucile explained sweetly.

One day we decided to paint the bathroom. I put on my blue jeans, a work shirt, and sneakers, and Lucile emerged from the closet in fancy blue satin pajamas and bare feet.

"I like to feel elegant while I'm doing messy work," she explained. "The calcimine will wash out. And bare toes can get a better grip on the edge of the bathtub while we do the ceiling."

Lucile dipped into the big bucket of calcimine, while I pried open the cans of mandarin red enamel and went to work on the water drum. For a while we worked in silence, broken by the plop of paint dripping onto the linoleum and by my grunts of satisfaction as I beheld the old white drum emerging as a dazzling red.

"Lucile," I asked suddenly, "are you typical?"



She gave me an impish sidewise glance and asked, "Typical of What?" although she knew very well what I meant.

"Well . . . you know. Men."

"I guess so," she said. "Isn't it the same in Greenwich Village?"

"No. At least, I don't think so. Or if it is, it's not half as casual. People keep talking about their New England consciences and quoting Hamlet, and stuff. And you never really know what your friends are up to, the way you do out here."

"But when you know," she asked gently, "it doesn't seem to matter, does it?"

"That's just it! You just assume it about everybody out here—and that's the end of it. Sometimes I think it has something to do with the climate and the beauty of the scenery. Everything is so easy, and lush, and lovely . . . there doesn't seem to be any sense in struggling."

"Like the Polynesians," she suggested.

"Exactly." I finished the water drum and moved to the electric cords snaking down the wall. The red made a nice contrast against the gleaming white wall, and I thought I might carry the theme a little further.

"How about the seat?" I asked, aiming my brush in its general direction. Running paint-daubed hands absently through her black curls, Lucile considered the proposition.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, finally, "after all, a bathroom isn't a place to be *too* amusing in."

So I started in on a second bucket of white, and after a while Lucile brought up the subject of men again.

"I guess I'm really a Polynesian, too," she said.

"How?"

"Well, people keep telling me about right and wrong,



but I just can't seem to see it. Everything natural seems right to me—unless it hurts other people, of course.”

“You mean to say there *are* Californians who think you're wrong?” I asked, half teasing, half curious. Lucile gestured vaguely in the general direction of the rest of San Francisco, splattering me with drops of calcimine.

“Of course,” she said. “You don't think all those people who live in neat little houses with daisy bushes in the front—all the thousands and thousands of hard-working San Franciscans—are like the people on Telegraph Hill, do you?”

“Then you aren't typical?”

“I guess I'm typical of a certain kind of Californian. Maybe of a group. A *very* large group.”

I laughed. “When they're good they're very, very good, and when they're bad they're—Polynesians! Is that what you mean?”

“Exactly.”

We climbed down from the rim of the bathtub and started scrubbing the floor. I couldn't resist one more question.

“Lucile,” I asked severely, “don't you ever worry about your immortal soul?”

She sat back on her pink heels and grinned at me. “Don't you know,” she said, “that a Californian (my kind, I mean) never talks about his soul, or a purpose in life, or any of those things? It makes him uneasy. No, of course I don't worry. As long as I'm happy, not bothering anybody else, my soul can take care of itself!”

Lucile seemed to attract odd characters as much as she did the conventional young men who took her dancing at the Mark Hopkins and the St. Francis. She never came

home from a painting excursion around the Hill, or a dancing class, without a trail of assorted men and women in her wake—or so it seemed to me. Lucile liked them all, and not always for amatory reasons. One was a middle-aged Frenchman who had an estate and castle in Normandy and talked of nothing but boar hunting. Another was an elderly woman radical, half-mad and always delightful. Her favorite story was of her attempt to revisit her little home town near Sacramento. She sat under a rosebush on the hillside above the town, she said, looked at the house and the river, and went away weeping. Then there was the sculptor with a handsome Indian face—he once lived on the Hill, he told us, with a young lady painter. So many friends came to call on them, he said, that their work was disturbed. So he finally went over to the Berkeley hills, caught two gigantic king snakes, and established them in his ménage. Nobody came to call after that.

But the weirdest of all was Maxwell Carlu, the sulphurous cripple. We never quite forgave Lucile for him.

Max had ochre skin, slanting black eyes, and sleek black hair. He looked Mongolian—but he was pure Boston.

“Really,” he would drawl, delicately twisting our one liqueur glass in his tapering fingers. “The only center of culture left in the world is Boston. Paris, of course, is dead, and it was always rather tawdry. London is nothing but roast beef and suet. New York is vulgar and nouveau riche. Out here you’re all barbarians. There’s really nothing left but Boston.”

Lucile had found him up on a parapet near Coit Tower. He was painting a view of the bay, and she was intrigued because he had made the water chartreuse and hills black. He explained that the picture expressed his emotional reaction to the view.

"If I were teaching you to paint," he elucidated, "I should place a green pepper before you—just that. You, of course, forgetting the fiery qualities of the pepper's taste, would paint a green pepper—just that. But I—do you know what I would paint?" He hesitated long enough for the question to sink in.

"I would paint a *red* pepper!"

By this time Lucile was no longer intrigued, but it was too late. From that day on Max was planted in our lives.

He took over not only my shack, but the houses of my friends. His acquaintances spread and branched and intertwined, and he kept us all in a highly nervous state by a quaint little habit of talebearing.

"Vicky Pike really ought to wash her hair more often," he would suggest, lounging comfortably in our only good chair.

Busy with housework and wishing that Max would move his feet out of the way of the broom, we wouldn't pay much attention.

"I suppose it does look messy sometimes," we would agree.

After five minutes of polite discussion of the Chinese theater, Max would hotfoot it over to Vicky Pike's.

"By the way, Vicky," he would say, "I hate to tell you this, but Margaret is really getting rather catty. She says you—ah—don't take proper care of your hair."

Naturally provoked, Vicky would utter some uncomplimentary remark about me, and Max would run back and tell me what Vicky said, leaving out, of course, why she had said it. Until we discovered what he was up to, things were rather strained.

Max had been graduated from Harvard, he told us, and had studied at Oxford for two years. Delicately he gave

us to understand that his father was a millionaire banker, living in the suburbs of Boston. Once, with an idle hour to spend in a library, I checked up on this in a Harvard yearbook, and found that he had indeed been graduated from Harvard and that his father lived just where Max said he did. I was enormously surprised.

He had just spent a year in Burma, he told us, and he was currently engaged in writing a history of Burmese temples. We never doubted, somehow, that he had been in the Orient for a while, but we had a feeling he had learned more about Chinese black magic than he had about Burmese temples. Certainly he had some curious knowledge which enabled him to appear and disappear at will. You never saw him come in the door—he was just there, suddenly, inexplicably. I always felt that if I had only been looking at the spot where he appeared, I would have seen a puff of sulphur twist from the floor boards and solidify into Maxwell.

He told us at first that he was staying at the Palace Hotel, but when we found that he wasn't, and charged him with the lie, he simply evaded all attempts to find out where he lived. Pete, who loathed him, was convinced he couldn't withstand direct questions on his dwelling place.

"By the way, Max," Pete asked casually, "where do you live?"

"In a hotel."

"Well, what hotel?"

"A hotel downtown."

"Downtown where?"

"Where there are hotels."

Even Pete couldn't press the matter any farther. But Val and I had an idea. Max used to cadge meals from Val, who

lived in the house below mine, and then disappear out into the night. Val was passionately curious to find out where he lived and so were Lucile and I.

"I tell you what," Val said one day, "I'll telephone you the minute Max leaves. Then you can be all ready to follow him, and I'll sneak out and join you."

"No," I said, "that won't do. He'll be passing our house just as you call, and guess what's up when he hears the phone. He's bright."

We finally rigged up another method of communication. We strung a rope from Val's bedroom window up through my garden and onto the porch. On my end was a little bell. It took hours to get the thing working, but finally the bell tinkled correctly when Val pulled it, and every night Lucile and I crouched in readiness for the signal.

Maxwell had his favorites on the Hill, and his enemies, and one could shift from one group to the other at his slightest whim. Usually he honored his favorites by dropping in at mealtime and hanging around until he was invited to share the spaghetti and salad.

On rare occasions, however, Maxwell's wallet bulged with money from some mysterious source. Then his good suit came out of hock and replaced the dirty sweat shirt and slacks, and he would seem more than ever like Oscar Wilde. Invariably he would invite two or three of the boys to lunch on champagne and lobster at the Palace, and at dinnertime he would arrive at one of the girls' houses carrying an armload of exotic vegetables and rare wines and insist on cooking the dinner himself. These were fine occasions indeed, but they didn't happen very often.

Unfortunately, just after we had rigged up our bell system, something Val said occasioned Max's displeasure, and

for three weeks he left her severely alone. She saved a lot of money on food, but we were crushed when we thought we might never find out where Max lived.

Then, one midnight, the bell tinkled. Luckily, we were still up, and we doused our light and tiptoed to the window. There was Maxwell, limping up the street, the fog swirling around his thin black figure. He turned the corner, and we dashed down the steps after him. Panting, Val joined us, and the three of us set out in the fog.

"He came back tonight," Val whispered. "He said he'd forgiven me." We all giggled and set off down Montgomery Street after the vague figure, two blocks ahead of us.

It wasn't hard work to keep him in sight. The fog seemed to muffle our footsteps, and Max never looked back. We caught up a block, and hid in a doorway while he hesitated in front of the Black Cat. Then we saw him look through his wallet, shrug his shoulders, and limp off toward Chinatown.

Chinatown? What would he be doing there? We followed up the dark street, rounded Grant Avenue, and saw him pausing in front of a curio shop, admiring a teak Buddha. He turned up another street, and we were close behind him now. We saw him turn right, into a little alley, and in thirty seconds we were peering down its narrow length.

Maxwell had disappeared.

A street light shone brightly along the cobblestones, the brick walls. For half the length of the alley the walls were unbroken by doors or windows. In the middle of the alley a narrow door led to one of the rabbit-warren Chinese tenements, but Max, handicapped by his limp, couldn't have reached it before we saw him. But he must have. We ran lightly down to the doorway and peered up the winding



wooden stairs. Not a light. Not a sound. No scrape of a limping foot, no echo of a sardonic laugh.

"I smell sulphur," I said.

Maxwell disappeared from our lives as characteristically as he vanished that night. He was suddenly gone, with no explanation, no good-bys. Comparing notes, we found that none of us had seen him for weeks, and that was the only way we knew he had left us.

There were rumors, of course. Pete said he saw Max out at the beach, barking for the merry-go-round. Vicky said she glimpsed him at the Top o' the Mark, buying brandy for two emaciated Chinese. Someone else went to Mexico for the winter and wrote that Max was busy organizing feuds in Tasco.

Comparing notes, we unearthed all the contortions, all the misrepresentations, all the gossip that Max had invented for his own amusement. It may have amused him, but it was the kind of scandal that could start a civil war on Olympus. When Max was around a poisonous fog seemed to drift over all of us. When he left the sun shone brightly again, on a peaceful Telegraph Hill.

IT WAS autumn now in San Francisco, and wine-making time on the Hill. As I walked down Union Street toward the streetcar I could smell the purple grapes hanging rich and heavy in the hidden arbors behind the bare white fronts of the Italian flats. Great wooden barrels, scoured for the wine to come, began to appear in front of every doorstep, and one day there was the stained old wine press starting its yearly journey from the houses at the top of the Hill down to the late harvesters at the bottom. Each day as I passed it would be moved a little farther down, its heady smell mingling with the warm air from the basement bakeries, the odors of Provolone, salami, and black olives from the dim Italian groceries, the acid reek of the dark, male-frequented alleys, the salt wind from the Pacific.

On another grape arbor, three thousand miles eastward, other grapes were ripening, and the yellow leaves of the maple tree were covering the roof of our farmhouse. Mother and Dad, worrying over my Wallingford job, nostalgic for a united family, issued a homing call: "Mary is pulling a birthday party for me on October 4," Dad wrote. "It will be a jim-dandy and will include a lot of musical and singing talent. I think I can stall the grape harvest until after that date. The crop is extraordinarily abundant, fragrant, and beautiful this year. I think you could almost smell your way home—happily I hope. It will be both a harvest-home and daughter-home festival, and God bless you and keep you,

and you'd better be prepared for paroxysms of happiness when you hear me tear off 'Cockles and Mussels,' 'Down on the Levee' and this and that on the guitar. You'll be amazed! If that won't lure you home, I don't know what will."

No, even that couldn't lure me home, although it gave me more than a few bad moments. Not when the first rain I had seen since last May was drifting wraithlike across the gray hills of San Francisco. Not when I could watch the tule fog twisting across the wharves and around the pillars of the Bay Bridge, while inside my shack the fire crackled and the mulled wine smelled of cinnamon . . . someday I would go home, but not now, not yet!

So I wrote them that I couldn't come home yet, lovingly in the first letters, and later on defiantly. Or, as Mother said, "flippantly."

"I do feel flippant and irreverent and too big for my britches," I admitted, "but it's a wonderful feeling! . . . Californiacs are never the native born, but are transplanted from other states, and I'm a transplant and a Californiac. . . ."

Thinking about life in New York compared with life in San Francisco, I wrote them a stream of consciousness letter: "I hate sixth avenue and loew's sheridan and white tower hamburger stands and gin and pineapple juice and subways and busses and eighth street and the george washington bridge. I hate café society and hypochondriacs and spinsters and birds eye food and war talk and going up in elevators and coming down in elevators and the prometheus in radio city. I obscenity on them all.

"But I love the italian grocery where I buy danish squash and the fog and the ships loading cargo and the cineraria which has just bloomed in my garden and sitting up half the night with pete and charles playing bach and carol with

her malicious tongue and crimson dresses and flower stands on the downtown streets and the untended newspaper stands too where they trust you to leave a nickel and my crazy roommate Lucile and the outline of tamalpais across the bay and the feeling I always have no matter what terrible things happen, everywhere, all the time, that I am happy and gay and healthy and young . . .”

“People don’t call me gloomy any more!” was the triumphant end to this adolescent effusion. That ended the campaign for the time being.

Life began to settle into a routine—or as much of a routine as it ever can in a city of the unexpected. I would arrive at the flat around eleven in the morning and start typing the revisions we had worked on the day before. Mr. Wallingford would still be sleeping, perhaps at home, perhaps in the workshop bedroom, wrapped in yellow sheets and his wax earmuffs. At noon, bathed and dressed by the many-talented James, he would be ready for work.

At three I would be allowed time out for an exquisite lunch concocted by James, while the master held whispered telephone conversations in the locked bedroom. At five, hard at work, Rosy would become conscious of the faint sounds of radio music from the apartment below. At five minutes past five he would curse, seize the heavy poker by the fireplace, and beat the floor with it for three minutes, with ferocious venom. He always hit the same place, and there was quite a hole now, just to the left of the hearth-rug. The sherry followed this episode, and then we would work again until seven or eight. He never wanted to stop, and he wanted to work every day of the week.

The day before Halloween I asked to get off early the next day, because Lucile and I were giving a party. Mr

Wallingford, who by this time was practically eating out of my hand, said certainly, and looked wistful. Would I allow him to send up a case of champagne? (The new liquor tax had just gone in, and beating it by a day, he had acquired \$950 worth of sherry, wines, and champagne, after a heated battle with his business manager.) I said no, thank you, we were having a barrel of beer. He said, how delightfully Bohemian.

Well, then, would I allow him to lend me James? I said no, thank you, a butler in the shack would be more embarrassing than constructive. His wistful look deepened, and I tried to harden my resolve. He said I probably had some very interesting friends. I said yes, they were nice people. He said he'd like to meet them some time. When I remained silent he couldn't stand it any more. "May I come to your party?" he asked.

So Rosy was invited to the party. When I called up the expected guests and told them they were to meet my satyr at last they were delighted—all except Pete.

"I don't approve of that guy," he glowered.

Pete was getting to be something of a problem. There were so many things he didn't approve of, or didn't believe in, and he stated them with all the exaggerated ferocity of a true Californian. There was the time soldier Joe brought me a corsage, and Pete wouldn't let me wear it. "I don't approve of cut flowers," he explained. And the time I praised Lake Tahoe, up in the Sierras: "I don't approve of lakes," he said.

Then there was the time we were having a fifty-cent dinner at The Tower Café, an Italian bistro on Grant Avenue. Just as we were raising our glasses of *vin ordinaire* in a toast, an old woman, shawled and bonneted, approached our table. She was selling some little religious magazine,

and her wrinkled hand trembled as she held it out for our inspection. Pete glanced at her and then looked down at his cigarette.

"I don't believe in God," he said.

The woman looked as if she had been belted in the stomach, and I kicked Pete hard under the table. She put the magazine back in her basket but stood there, still staring at Pete.

"Don't you believe in the goodness of humanity?" she asked finally. Always resentful of any challenge, Pete spoke bitterly.

"I don't believe in humanity, or goodness either," he answered.

The woman's face was stricken as she moved away. I couldn't bear it, and I said so.

"It doesn't matter a damn whether or not you believe in God," I said, "but you've no right to attack the faith of that poor old frump. Maybe she is a crackpot, but she's old and that's probably all that sustains her."

"This is a free country," he maintained, "and besides, I've got a moral obligation to state the truth as I see it whenever anyone asks me. She's stupid, and stupid people don't deserve consideration."

I realized that Pete was in one of his Cossack moods and let it drop. But I couldn't forget the episode, and I don't think Pete ever quite forgot that kick under the table.

Pete came to the Halloween party reluctantly, but a lot of other people came to see Mr. Wallingford. There was Bob Read, a minute and lyrical young poet, currently stagnating as a seaman, first class. There was Vicky, the painter who lived just over the hilltop, and her roommate Pauly, a blond and hearty wench who didn't like me, but who came

anyway; Val Bleeker, the good soul who gave such fine parties next door; Charles, in a terrible mood of wild gaiety; Burt, a handsome Carmel product who couldn't decide whether to study medicine or anthropology and who had almost reached thirty without making up his mind; Lucile, of course, and Leanore, the pretty Marin County deb who sometimes stayed at the shack when she wanted to get away from it all.

Sergeant Joe, the soldier with the face of an endearing squirrel, helped me cut pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns. The last one, big enough for Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater's wife, Joe insisted on carving into a replica of Satterthwaite Hopkins Wallingford, as I had described him. With some hesitancy I let him put it out on the balcony, to greet the guests.

Mr. Wallingford arrived late, as the party was getting into full swing. It took me a long time to discover the moment when a California party reaches its fullest swing, because Californians don't sing very much, and in the East an outbreak of "The Old Mill Stream" had always been my test. I eventually discovered, however, that in California playing games was the signal that everyone was having a good time. At some parties the boys start walking the ridge-poles or tossing paper cartons of water out the window (flooding the living room and smashing the canvas roofs of cars below) and then everyone seems to have fun except a reserved Easterner, who goes out in the garden and sings "Honey, Honey, Bless Your Heart" by herself.

Bob Read was just describing a modified form of charades when Mr. Wallingford arrived. Lurching, as usual, Rosy stepped through the front door into the living room, blinking foolishly in the candlelight. His elegant camel's-hair topcoat was slung across his shoulders, and as he put out

his right hand to greet me it slithered to the floor. Politely, everyone rushed to pick it up, and poor old Rosy was almost knocked over in the struggle. When the confusion finally cleared, I introduced him around, shoved him into the one comfortable chair, brought him some of his own sherry (which James had tactfully provided) and got us squared away for some games.

Everything went beautifully until Rosy was It. Burt, escorting him to the end of the room, whispered a phrase which Rosy had to act out to all of us, without using any words. Nodding his comprehension, he tottered back to the center of the room and laboriously let himself down to the floor, leaning on his one good arm. The other, which he had bruised when he fell on his telephone, was in a Sulka-scarf sling. For five minutes he lay flat on the Chinese matting, writhing and flailing his yellow claws above his head. We kept suggesting he try something else, but he just shook his head and continued to writhe. When it got too unbearable, we gave up.

"The death of Camille," he said.

He tried to stand up, but he couldn't make it. In a kind of horrified immobility, we watched him struggle, and this time the writhing was real. He would lean on what passed for his good arm, get partly to his knees, and then the arm would collapse. We all seemed to be stuck to our chairs with fascinated embarrassment. In the silence he grunted suddenly, and the noise broke the spell. Bob and Joe rushed forward, hauled him to his seat, dusted him off, and the game went on, while Pete sat in a corner, nourishing his private stock of Green Dragon ale and glaring at Rosy.

After midnight everyone drifted off except Bob Read and Vicky, who was determined to safeguard Lucile and me by staying until the dangerous Wallingford left. Bob picked



up a copy of John Donne, and in his deep and beautiful voice read the sermon on "for whom the bell tolls," while the last flames flickered out in the fireplace and the candles burned low in the blackened pumpkins. No one said much after that, and a few minutes later, when James called for Mr. Wallingford, he left silently without the usual flutter and fanfare.

He had a good time, though. He talked about my friends for days afterward, and two weeks later he gave a party himself, half for my friends, half for his. It was not a success. After a few acid skirmishes, the *soignée* babes and the tuxedoed clubmen whom Rosy had invited collected in the study, while the raffish and critical crew who were my friends segregated themselves in the living room, where Manuelo, the Mexican guitarist from the Xochimilco, sang some dirty Spanish songs and discussed the art of drinking tequila (first the salt in the crotch of the hand, he said, then the lemon, and then the liquor). Poor old Rosy wanted to join us, but his wife kept dragging him back into the other room. It was a very bad party.

The autumn rains carried us into the early days of winter. It was not cold—just chilly enough so that you stopped wishing for an icebox (none of the old houses have them) and looked forward to a fire in the evening. True Californians can go through the coldest days without any heat in the house, but fragile transplants from steam-heated territories may suffer a little before they get acclimated. The first winter I was in San Francisco I always wore woolen stockings, woolen underwear, and two sweaters whenever I visited my relatives. And surreptitiously I would try to edge over to the thermostat and push it a little higher when

they weren't looking. I didn't need to this winter. I was as hardy as the rest of them.

Outside the city the golden hills began to turn green, the air was soft and tranquil, the white fog in the evening thinner than it had been in August. Days at the Wallingford workshop were anything but tranquil, but they were amusing. Rosy had to take daily diathermy treatments for his bad arm, and part of my duties, shared with James, was to convince him that he really *must* keep his appointment with the doctor. Petulantly he would refuse, insisting that the doctor was out of town, that he had to finish the play, that his arm didn't hurt any more. The whole process was doubled in agony if it was the dentist awaiting him, and in that case only our combined threats to resign immediately could get him on his way, tottering to the car, staring balefully over his shoulder at me, muttering imprecations.

In the evening, when I could get away, life resumed its pleasant character, fantastic and somehow dreamlike. As always, we picnicked on the slopes of Tamalpais, danced, talked about people and places, drank wine. We drove to a farm near the sea and walked across a cow pasture to a little cove, where the ocean came roaring up the sands between two cliffs of rock, throwing pebbles in our faces. . . . Going back in the evening, reeling with sunlight and the echo of crashing surf, I tried to jump a gully and fell into the ooze of black slime and algae in the bottom. . . . I hosed my clothes at the farmhouse and padded barefoot and dripping to dinner in a Sausalito restaurant.

Sergeant Joe and I went to call on an old-time circus man, who lived in a little house on Russian Hill. A swarthy individual with opaque black eyes and delicate hands, he talked all evening of the dog and pony act he used to manage and of the book he was writing about circus animals. . . . Black

panthers, he said, correspond in the animal world to insane human beings in our world. . . . He showed us the miniature circus he had made: sawdust rings, hundreds of clowns, carved red and gold wagons, tiny flashlight bulbs spotlighting microscopic trapeze artists—any moment, I felt, the caliope would whistle, the clowns tumble, the seal play “America” on the tiny trumpets. I thought of the perfect little city which Satan’s young nephew constructed in Mark Twain’s *Mysterious Stranger*, the animated manikins running up and down the castle walls, casually crushed out when the boy tired of their similarity to human beings. . . . Behind the black velvet curtains at one end of the room a woman coughed all evening, but she never appeared. “Perhaps he married the bearded lady,” Joe whispered.

We danced . . . talked about people and places . . . drank wine. It was not always pleasant. One evening, when Pete was away, I went with Charles and Vicky up to the boys’ rooftop flat, to watch an eclipse of the moon. Charles and Vicky were supposed to be in love, but something was wrong. A girl we knew only slightly dropped in, got drunk with Charles, and disappeared with him into the bedroom. Vicky and I sat in the brightly lighted kitchen. . . . She finished a bottle of gin, I pulled the petals off a wilting carnation, and the springs creaked in the next room. In the courtyard beyond the open window the Hill idiot, an Italian boy, sat under the pepper tree, babbling at passing sailors and screaming, “Mamma, Mamma,” whenever the wind blew the trailing branches of the tree against his face.

“Fantastic, absolutely fantastic,” Vicky kept muttering.

“What is?”

“These Californians . . . they have sold their shadows to the devil . . . they have no souls. . . .”

The bottle was empty, and I took her home.

But beauty always reasserted itself. Sometimes Pete and I dined on cracked crab at Fisherman's Wharf, then walked a mile or so along the water's edge to the St. Francis Yacht Harbor. There, gently swaying at anchor, was our dream, our love, our wistful shrine of adoration.

The *Zaca* was a two-masted, gaff-rigged schooner built in 1930 by Templeton Crocker for a reputed \$125,000. She was all mahogany and silver, clean lines, and massive dignity. Mr. Crocker had taken her on several scientific expeditions to the South Seas and then had decided to sell her. The asking price, Pete had heard, was \$80,000, and now the 118-foot schooner was the whitest elephant on the West Coast. But we loved the *Zaca* dearly, and night after night we would sit on the dark pier, staring at the tangle of her rigging as it rocked back and forth against the moon, talking of the places she had visited—Pitcairn, Fernandes Island, where Robinson Crusoe lived, the Peru bird islands. . . .

One day the Wallingfords asked me to a dinner party at their big house on the far slope of Russian Hill. Mr. Wallingford sent his favorite taxi driver to fetch me, but when I told him the address he looked at me strangely.

"You don't want to go there, girlie," he said chummily. "You want to go to the apartment on Hyde."

"I want to go to the Wallingford residence," I insisted.

"But, girlie, his wife's there!"

I battled him all the way, and as Mrs. Wallingford greeted me at the entrance, I looked down and saw the cabby staring at us, open-mouthed.

"My dear," Mrs. Wallingford said, "I'm so dreadfully sorry but all the other guests declined, and there is a little French movie over on Fillmore that I simply must see and it's the last night. So I know you won't mind just dining with Rosy?"

Rather dazed, I said no. But the cab driver had put me in an ugly mood, to say the least.

During our dinner *à deux* Rosy dropped his elaborate office formalities and played the debonair man of the world.

"Dear heart," he asked, between mouthfuls of Vichy-soisse, "what do you most desire from life?"

"Well . . . I'd like six red setters and two great Danes."

"Ah, yes. And what else?"

"I'd like a little sailboat, a twenty-foot sloop, maybe."

Rosy reached for the silver bell and rang it imperiously. James, impassive as ever, came in from the kitchen and stood at attention. Rosy waved a languid hand of command.

"James," he ordered, "I want you to go down to the yacht harbor in the morning and purchase the *Zaca* for Miss Parton."

James knew his job. He bowed, said, "Yes, sir," disappeared through the swinging door—and that was the last I heard of Rosy buying the *Zaca* for Miss Parton.

I WAS still working with Mr. Wallingford when Smitty, the Danish third mate from the *West Wind*, navigated his brilliant orbit across my skies for the second time. It was a rare Sunday that I wasn't working, and today I was luxuriating in a music-filled afternoon of housework when the telephone rang.

It was fortunate that I recognized Smitty's drawl, because he didn't bother with identification. He had been away at sea for many months, but we might still be dancing at the William Tell Hotel from the way he talked.

"I am sitting here meditating in Golden Gate Park," he said. "I do not like to go to these joints other characters talk about, instead I like to go to the park and contemplate the pigeons and to meditate awhile. Then I like to go over to the chess pavilion at Haight Street on the edge of the park and to watch the old Mexicans play chess. I have now done all that."

"Hello, Smitty," I interrupted.

"Hello. So now I will go down to Fisherman's Wharf and see the gulls and meditate some more, and if you are there, why, there you are." He hung up.

It was a command performance not to be ignored. Giving Smitty time to get across town, I slicked myself into a reasonable facsimile of my freighter appearance and set off for Fisherman's Wharf. Smitty hadn't said where I'd

find him, but the Wharf isn't very big and I knew he'd turn up somewhere.

The streets were crowded with tourists and barkers for the innumerable sea-food eating places. On the sidewalks mounds of bluish-white crabs were piled beside the steaming caldrons where lobsters met their destiny. For ten cents I bought a bag of prawns, gigantic shrimps with a taste of iodine, and peeled them as I walked out toward the wooden wharves where the blue and gray fishing boats were tied. On the boats the rosy Italians were hoisting brown nets to the accompaniment of curses and the squealing of winches, and from the railings of the wharves intensely crouched boys trailed fishing lines into the rippling water.

Sure enough, Smitty sat on the end of a pier, his feet dangling down against the piles. He glanced up briefly as I sat down beside him.

"So there you are," he said. There was a little more gray in the black cap of his hair, but his eyes were as inscrutable as ever, his merry face still as brown. I proffered the bag of prawns for greeting.

"Have a prawn," I said.

We sat in silence, munching, watching the brittle shells we had pulled from the prawns float in the current, the swift dive of a gull. At last I timidly asked Smitty where he had gone on this trip. He was usually mysterious, and I didn't really expect a coherent answer.

"Best let sleepin' dogs lie," he said. He thought for a minute and chuckled. "I can tell you a story about sleepin' dogs," he said. "Happened when I wuz—now where wuz it?—oh, yeah, on the Red Sea.

"We sailed into this town, and God what a town it wuz! One street runnin' up the hill and at the end of it wuz the desert. An' on either side wuz them bazaars, with them





Arabs screaming at you to buy their stuff. And people from all over in them long burnoses, an' camels wandering in an' out an' everybody runnin' around mad like March hares, an' God knows what all.

"So up at the end of the street, see, wuz the grog shop, an' that wuz where we wuz bound. We got through all right, after we pushed out of the way a few old Arabs what were sleeping in the door.

"Now this grog shop wuz funny. It wuz divided into two open porches; one wuz for the British soldiers what ran the town and one wuz for us just ordinary guys. Them limeys couldn't mix, you know. It don't do for discipline.

"Well, it seems that down the street there wuz trouble goin' on. The butcher wuzn't doin' any business. Nobody came into his shop at all, and this jus wuzn't natural. So he gets to worryin' an' finally he figures there must be some-thin' wrong. So he looks out in the street, and there in front of his shop is a dead dog, and it's pretty damn dead. So naturally nobody feels much like comin' in to buy meat. The butcher gets all excited, and he calls a couple of Arab boys, jus' riffraff, and he gives them a penny to take the dog away. The boys tie a rope around one of the legs of the dog an' cart him up the street. But right in front of the carpetmaker's shop they get a bright idea. This dog's goin' to be a gold mine, an' right then an' there that town goes on the dog standard.

"The boys leave the dog in front of the carpetmaker's shop, an' pretty soon the carpetmaker gets a whiff of that there dog perfume. So he runs out, all excited like, screamin' his head off, an' the boys offer to take the dog away—for a price. The carpetmaker forks out, an' the boys start draggin' that dog up the street.

"About right now we come into the picture. We wuz sit-

tin' there nice and quiet like, drinkin' our warm beer (Jesus, that warm beer!) when we begins to smell somethin' we don't like so much. So we looks out, and there's the dead dog in front of the door. He wuz stinkin' pretty bad by that time. So we goes out an' the boys come up, an' say they'll take him away for a couple of pennies. By this time they wuz beamin' all over. We says O.K. an' they drags the dog away. But about five minutes later we begin to smell that God-awful smell again. By Jesus, the dog wuz back! We goes out an' gives them boys hell, but they want us to pay all over again. So we says, well, we'll buy the damned dog, an' bury him ourselves. An' the boys don't want to sell their stinkin' gold mine, but finally they do. One of our mates grabs holt of the rope an' starts out to the end of the street, to bury the dog somewhere in the desert.

"So there we wuz, sittin' there nice an' quiet again, with some more of that warm beer, when back he comes, draggin' that dog! Seems he got to the top, an' there wuz a big iron fence an' a British sentry. They wouldn't let him through into the desert, not even to bury the dog. So he brings it back.

"We wuz sick of the dog by this time, so we kicks it under the table and pours half a bottle of cheap rum over it to make it stink less. But it only makes it worse, so we finish the bottle of rum ourselves.

"Well, them Britishers sittin' on the porch next to us haven't seen nothin' of what's goin' on, but pretty soon some of that dog perfume starts driftin' over to them. They sticks up them British noses an' goes 'sniff sniff' an' pretty soon one of them says, 'Blimey, this don't do!' an' he leaves. An' the rest of 'em, one by one ease out, not knowin' what's wrong, but not bein' able to take that smell.

"The old Greek what ran the grog shop, he hadn't seen

nothin' either. He comes along with his own dog, a dirty old cur, an' this dog lifts up his nose an' sniffs, then he runs under the table an' bumps into our dead dog. Well, you shoulda heard that dog howl an' see the way it jump back! It sure wuz a funny sight.

"So of course the old Greek, he lifts up the tablecloth, an' looks under, an' when he sees that dead dog, he screams as bad as his mutt did. An' curse! Arab an' Greek mixed, yellin' an' screamin', shovin' us out into the street. Finally he picks up the dead dog an' heaves it after us.

"By this time the police are there. They try to straighten things out, but it gets pretty complicated, seein' as how we'd had all that warm beer an' finished that there cheap rum. But they got holt of the Arab boys what had sold us the dog.

"'Did you *buy* this dog?' they asked us.

"Well, we *had* bought the dog, by Jesus, an' we had to say so.

"'Then take the dog away an' bury it somewhere,' they told us.

"So we started down that long street, draggin' that damned dog at the end of the dirty rope. The police wuz watchin' us, the Arab boys wuz shoutin', an' everybody on that whole street wuz cursin' us an' heavin' manure at us an' the stinkin' dog.

"Well, we got in front of the butcher shop, where we'd found out the whole thing started, an' we left the dog. The butcher run out yellin' like mad an' started chasin' us. We run down the street, in an' out among them camels an' bazaars an' old dirty Arabs, an' we jumped quick into the bus waitin' there to take us out to the pier where the ship wuz.

"We told the driver to take off right away, an' to go fast.

An' you know what that dirty Arab bastard did? He charged us double fare!"

Smitty uncurled his legs from around the piling and stood up. "Yeah," he said, lighting a cigarette. "That sayin', Let sleepin' dogs lie, put me in mind of that story."

Smitty was going to be in town for a few days, and Lucile and I decided that it would be fun to invite him to a small party. Nothing fancy, nothing large, just an evening at home by the fire with a few kindred souls we thought he might enjoy. Poor thing, he probably didn't get many quiet evenings like that. We found him one morning down on the forward deck of the *West Wind*, and he said sure, he'd like to come.

With remarkable lack of premonition, or even common sense, I mentioned the little party to Clay McDaniel and Johnny Ney, the kind of boys who like to roll 100-gallon beer kegs downhill. Clay was the nominal owner of Heidi, a massive and affectionate St. Bernard, and Johnny was a suave tatterdemalion, only nineteen years old, but ancient in light-hearted depravity.

"Fine," said Clay, "we'll bring a few people."

"And a couple of bottles," Johnny added generously, knowing very well that for solid financial reasons I never served anything but beer or wine.

"Better still," Clay said, "we'll get a beer keg. We've been wanting to give a party for a long time, but our landlady won't let us, on account of the noise."

It was out of my hands, so I just sat back and let the party roll over me. Oh, well—Mr. Wallingford had raised my salary again, and he was out of town for the week end. Causes enough for celebration. So Lucile and I called up everyone we knew or had even met in San Francisco and

told them to bring their friends, and Clay and Johnny did the same. But somehow we didn't find time to let Smitty know that the party was going to be a little larger than he expected, and when he arrived at the party all he could do was stand in the door and say, "My word. Fancy this. My word." Favorite expressions of Smitty's when he was dumfounded.

The shack was so full of people he could hardly keep his balance. The two couches held ten persons apiece, in the center of the room Joe Harris was teaching Margery King to rumba, and Lucile was demonstrating some techniques of modern dancing. At least fifty characters milled about what was left of the room. The phonograph was blaring and everyone was talking at once.

"My word," Smitty said for the fifth time. He took a deep breath and headed for the beer barrel. Thereafter he seemed to do all right. I didn't have much time to notice. People kept rushing up to me and shouting: "Fantastic party! Utterly fantastic!" and between times I caught only snatches of conversation:

". . . we always used to visit the city morgue because it had such lovely plush chairs. . . ."

"Some people laugh, but I think that's distracting."

"So Hearst ordered these grapes and the city editor found out that they were a special chocolate-dipped Assyrian grape, so he bought a load of grapes and all the reporters sat up all night, melting Hershey bars in the art department and dipping the grapes. . . ."

"The secret of the Chinese actor's art is in the use of the neck. Now the Chinese neck is constructed—" That was Red Symes, a grizzled old-time socialist and writer, always good for a dissertation.

"The trouble with women is they don't want to work,"

said Sergeant Joe Schoeninger, voicing a permanent peeve. "They ought to be put in factories, all of them."

"Get thee to a cannery!" Vicky quipped.

The mixture of people was fantastic in itself. Three ballet dancers, a British girl, here on a secret government mission, a couple of composers who wrote only for percussion instruments, eight newspapermen and five newspaperwomen, two or three poets, several people I didn't know and never did meet, a number of inexplicable soldiers and sailors, and a rotund gentleman who turned out to be the West Coast head of the Office of War Information. I never did know how he got in, but he seemed to be having a good time. Ages of the guests ran from seventeen to seventy, if you counted out Heidi, the St. Bernard, who was only four, and all of the ages seemed to be having the time of their lives. The beer poured in a steady stream of cool froth, the party swirled and eddied, and the noise and music seemed to lift the little shack up into the sky, and whirl it through space, like Dorothy's house in *The Wizard of Oz*.

I had one moment of realization, when I seemed to stand outside the weird scene. I remembered suddenly the morning I arrived in San Francisco, over a year ago. I remembered standing on the bridge of the *West Wind* in the dawn, looking up at the hills of San Francisco, thinking of the people I did not yet know who would become my friends. And now—here they were. Some of them I actively disliked, some I would forget in five minutes, but more of them were my friends, and I was grateful to them and to San Francisco.

Then the party engulfed me again, and I forgot the retrospective view in the crazy happiness of the moment. Noise, music, laughter, smiles, chatter, noise, music—and suddenly, silence. The party was over.

In the wreckage of the room Bob Read (who always seemed to be a party late-stayer) sat cross-legged in front of the fire, reciting his new epic poem, *Mutilated London*, while Smitty, still mysteriously sober, leaned against a couch, listening and grinning. Only half concentrating, I looked at the room—the curtains askew, rugs rolled aside, cigarette butts and paper cups littering the floor, couch covers twisted, confetti strewn over everything—that had been Lucile's idea, and Lucile had disappeared and probably wouldn't be back in time to help sweep it up.

There was a knock at the door, and thinking that someone had forgotten something, I opened it warily. There, immaculate in a tuxedo, stood the young drama critic of the *Examiner*, with a beautiful blonde, exquisite and cool in a white satin evening dress.

"Oh," they said, "is the party over?"

"Just about, but come on in. It's only two-thirty."

They wandered in, I introduced them, and gingerly they sat down on the edge of the wrecked couch. Politely they ignored the hurricane appearance of the room, and I wondered if they thought I always kept it that way. As I was trying to decide whether I should mention that there *had* been a party, I heard a tremendous thumping noise in the kitchen. The walls trembled for a moment, and then Heidi trotted in, wagging her tail. In the excitement she had been forgotten, and here she was, amiably crushing the floor in as she put down each gigantic paw.

"My God," said the blonde.

"My word," said Smitty.

"Perhaps we should all adjourn to Vanessi's for a hamburger," the drama critic suggested.

We didn't dare leave Heidi alone in the house, so we piled her in the back of the blonde's station wagon with us. In

front of Vanessi's we argued. The place was expensive and elegant, with red carpets and potted plants. Perhaps they didn't like dogs. On the other hand, Heidi would probably bay with loneliness if we left her in the car. So we took her with us.

Before you get to the dining room at Vanessi's you pass through a long room with a counter, where the customers sit on swivel seats. They didn't sit there long—Heidi took care of that. One whiff from the kitchen beyond the dining room, and Heidi was off, knocking the patrons from their stools in her eager progress. Pleading, we rushed after her, leaping over the recumbent forms of dazed but furious customers. Smitty caught hold of Heidi's collar, but she shook him off like a puff of thistledown and headed with determination for the kitchen.

She never got there, because she didn't need to. She saw what she wanted right on a table in the center of the dining room. A svelte redhead sat with her back to Heidi, and on the plate before her lay a sizzling brown steak. What more could a St. Bernard want? Heidi dropped her massive head over the girl's shoulder and devoured the steak in one drooling gulp. I never saw a redhead jump so far and so fast in my life.

Mr. Vanessi, a portly Italian with imposing mustaches, was buzzing about us in a screaming rage, the customers were standing on their chairs and shouting, and we were pulling and tugging at Heidi's collar, pleading with her. Heidi, confused and full of steak, lay down on her back (knocking over a couple of tables in the process) and waved her feet lazily in the air, while the drama critic and the blonde retreated toward the door and tried to look as if they didn't know us.

Heaving and grunting, Smitty and Bob and I finally rolled



Heidi over and got her on her feet. Which was fine, except that she was facing the wrong direction, and turning her around was harder than turning the *Queen Mary* in the Swanee River. As a last resort I grabbed a half-eaten chop from a deserted table and held it in front of Heidi's nose. That did the trick, and she pounded after me as I ran from the room, waving the chop behind me. Several guests cheered and applauded from their perches.

Everything was clear then, except the entrance, and we crashed smack into a large gentleman wavering in the doorway. Not very surprised, I saw that he was Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom. Slapsie Maxie untangled himself from Heidi and looked her over.

"Nice doggie wanta steak?" he asked.

Nice doggie bolted out the door and down the street. Smitty was trying to grab her tail, and Bob, a lightfooted bantamweight, was clinging to her collar, half astride and half dragging behind. Slapsie Maxie pounded after them, shouting that "alla nice doggie wants isa steak!" and I panted behind, with a screaming Mr. Vanessi hot on my heels.

With remarkable presence of mind the drama critic and the blonde jumped into the station wagon and managed to maneuver it in Heidi's path. We all piled in on top of each other and tore down the street, just as we heard the screech of police sirens turning into Broadway.

"My word," said Smitty, "that wuz a very good party."

I wrote Mother and Dad about the party and the scene with Heidi. Several days later I got a letter from Dad. "That sounded like a wonderful party," he wrote wistfully. "If you invite me to your next one, I will bring a horse."

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WHERE DID THEY HANG  
THE BASS DRUM?

ED ROSENTHAL, who worked in the sports department of the *Call Bulletin*, dropped by one night with exciting news. Caroline Clifton, the only girl reporter on the paper at that time, was leaving to have a baby, and Fred Walker, the city editor, was desperately trying to fill her place. It might take a couple of weeks' dickering—but would I be interested in trying out?

Would I!

Mr. Wallingford was becoming more and more eccentric. His solicitous concern over every detail of my life and his incessant and fallacious interpretations of every expression that crossed my face were almost driving me mad. Once, when I grimaced after burning my finger with a cigarette, he sprang to his feet and cried, "Oh, Dear Heart! Have I said something to wound you?" My nerves ragged, I burst into tears. He patted my shoulder, but I saw a smile of furtive satisfaction light his wrinkled face.

Then there was our new play: the heroine, after falling into disgrace at Annapolis, where her fiancé had misinterpreted a glimpse of her "stays" on his best friend's bed, finds herself stranded on the water front in Shanghai. She is seduced by a bloated millionaire, who insists on adding her photograph to his "rouge gallery," a collection of photographs of other beautiful girls he has rescued from the water front. He gives her money to return to the States,

but before she leaves China she picks up one of those old-fashioned dentist chairs with movable iron arms to pin the patient in place. Back in America she craftily learns dentistry, then sets up office in San Francisco, waiting for the villain's inevitable appearance.

Of course he arrives, of course he has a toothache, and of course he chooses our heroine (disguised) for a dentist. Once in the chair she springs the iron arms around him and locks them in place. She reveals herself to him as the woman he ruined, then screaming with vengeance, takes up her blowtorch and chars him into a blackened corpse, just as her repentant fiancé rushes into the room for a romantic clinch.

I'd like to emphasize that I had nothing to do with the details of this repulsive plot—but it had a lot to do with my decision to make a grab for the *Call Bulletin* job.

Without telling Rosy anything about it or writing my parents, I went down and talked to Fred Walker. Handsome and sardonic, he both frightened and encouraged me with his promise to look over what I'd written and let me know in a week. So for a few days I had time to think over what I knew of newspaper work, of editors, and of the *Call Bulletin* in particular.

Carrying on the worst of the Hearst tradition, it was not a good newspaper. It was shrill, blatant, bigoted, and sentimental. In a city which demands sensationalism in its newspapers, the *Call* was outstanding for its screaming headlines and startling make-up. But as far as I was concerned, it had one important element in its favor—Fremont Older. Managing editor for many years of the *Bulletin*, and later of the *Call*, Older had so thoroughly identified his gigantic personality with these two papers (which eventually merged) that I was sure that something of his pas-

sionate goodness must have lingered with them, even though he had been dead for six years.

I myself had only a child's memory of Older—somehow I always associated him with the Walrus in *Alice in Wonderland*—but my father had worked for many years as a reporter under him, and I had heard many stories about the man Dad called “the greatest human being I’ve ever known.”

My favorite was of the time Older telephoned Dad at one in the morning and in great excitement asked him to come down right away to a private room in the Poodle Dog—a glamorous French restaurant of the forty-niner days, its name perverted by the miners from its original Poudre d’Or.

Dad jumped into his clothes and set off at a fast clip. Older was a battling editor, enemy of crooks and gangsters, and there had been three days of heavy gunfire in what Dad called “that belch of wildly intemperate journalism which prevailed in San Francisco.” Older was in danger, Dad knew, and as he rushed into the Poodle Dog he expected anything—perhaps to find Older wounded, cornered by the crooks, or held for ransom.

Camille showed Dad to a back room on the third floor, and there was Older, pacing back and forth, gnawing an unlighted cigar, his normally gentle eyes blazing. As Dad entered Older reached for his pocket—and drew forth a frazzled copy of Montaigne’s essays.

“Take a look at that!” he roared, indicating a marked passage. “And that! And that!”

Until dawn they pored over the Frenchman’s essays. Dad got all worked up over them too, and after the first shock passed he wasn’t surprised that Older had dragged him out of bed to share a Montaigne revel at the old Poodle Dog. After all—this was the man who once ripped out his front

page when the first copy of Omar Khayyám arrived in San Francisco, and reprinted the entire poem.

At the end of a week Fred Walker called me into the *Call* office—not the old one where Dad and Older had worked, but a splendid new green building on Howard Street—and told me I could have a week's try-out for Caroline's job.

"Just a week," he said darkly. "I'm going to try out five other girls, and you're the first. Report at seven Monday morning."

Dancing on angel's pinfeathers, I dropped by to see Ed Rosenthal. He told me solemnly how to behave, how to sit down at a desk, how to act as if I were an old-timer.

"Walker told me he was going to give you a grueling test," he warned, "and make it so tough that you'd want to quit. But if you survive it I think he'll keep you on."

That sounded nasty, but I'd manage. I rushed home and sent off a telegram to my parents. They replied immediately in another telegram, its first sentence a quote from our favorite ballad, "Bell Bottom Trousers":

YOU'LL CLIMB THE RIGGING AS YOUR DADDY USED TO DO. NO BETS HERE AS TO THE WINNER. ITS IN THE BAG. GET YOUR STORY IN THE LEAD AND DONT SASS THE COPY READERS. FOREVER LOVINGLY AND NOW FRATERNALLY. MARY AND LEM.

It was harder to break the news to Mr. Wallingford. I asked James to stand by with a sponge and the spirits of ammonia and then I informed Mr. Wallingford that I had "something to tell him."

He knew what it was, I guess. Carefully he shut the living-room doors, pulled the window curtains, sat down in his green leather chair, and pulled out the light.

"I can only face it in the dark," he said hoarsely.

I told him then that I had been offered a job I couldn't

turn down . . . something I had always wanted to do . . . all the things one says.

We sat a long time in the darkness in silence. I could hear his heavy breathing across the table.

"You must do it, Dear Heart," he said finally. "I will struggle on without you, God knows how. But remember—if you ever want to return to me—I'll be waiting."

I thought it was his usual hyperbole. But when I turned on the lights I saw the tears spilling from his old eyes.

I never went back to him, and I was always too busy to pay much attention to his infrequent letters and his occasional telephone calls. I am sorry now. He was always kind and honest with me, and last winter when I read of his death, alone in his rooms at a club where wealthy and lonely San Franciscans spend their old age, I was truly sorry and ashamed.

The city room of the *Call Bulletin*, its desks shining under bright electric lights, was almost deserted when I arrived at five minutes to seven. That was fortunate, because although Ed had told me I must "walk in with the confident air of Queen Mary" I was so terrified of this new adventure that only prayers kept my knees from buckling. Besides, six in the morning was about four hours earlier than my usual rising time, and although it was interesting to don my brand-new clothes by starlight, I had had time for only three cups of black coffee, and that obviously wasn't enough.

Sleepily and timidly then, I walked into the quiet room. When I saw Mr. Walker at his desk I tried to pull myself together and approach him like Queen Mary under full sail. He seemed unimpressed and merely nodded, first at me, then at a distant desk, with an impersonal lack of discrimination between the desk and me. I sat down at the

desk, saw that the printed name "Caroline" had been pasted on the typewriter, peeked in the drawers and saw that they still contained Caroline's notes, and began to feel like an interloper.

Crouched on the edge of my chair, ready to leap if Mr. Walker should call me, I stared at him fixedly, waiting for my first assignment. He never looked my way, and when I tired of studying the morose lines of his chiseled profile, I chanced a few glances at the other reporters now opening their desks and tossing their coats and hats over the rims of the tall wastebaskets. Not one of them looked at me, and no one spoke, even the young man at the next desk. Perhaps I should have spoken, but I was too frightened, too forlorn. And Ed Rosenthal didn't seem to be anywhere around.

To comfort myself I patted my new clothes. The coat was beautiful—a heather-blue tweed, very sporty, very dashing, very expensive. It was lucky the City of Paris had allowed me to open a charge account . . . of course I had been brought up to believe that charge accounts were purse-traps for the unwise . . . but I was emancipated, wasn't I? Besides, I couldn't have paid for the coat otherwise. As for the dress, it was a classic tan corduroy, with pigskin buttons. I didn't realize then that it looked more like an overcoat than a dress—as far as I could see it was exactly like the dresses worn by Rosalind Russell when she played the part of a dazzling, scoop-getting, by-lined female reporter. Just like I was going to be.

But the greatest comfort was Dad's letter of advice, which had arrived on Saturday. It looked like pretty good advice for me then, and now that I've had a little more experience I know that it's fine advice for any newspaper cub, even though some of its suggestions relate purely to San Fran-

cisco. Sure that Walker would never, never give me an assignment (at least that morning), I sat farther back in my chair and reread the letter for the tenth time:

Dearest Margaret:

This is Thursday, with two stories due today and no time for celebrating, so here are a few tips on how to hold a beginner's newspaper job—Little Rollo, Message to Garcia, Joe Miller, etc., but sound, if subservient, techniques:

1. When the boss gives you an assignment, don't ask him any more questions about it than you have to. Be sure you get his idea straight, but if he has assumed that you know who Joe Hokus is, and you don't, never ask him. Just take the assignment and fill out your information from somebody on the staff or from the morgue.

2. Regard the thorough reading of the *morning* newspapers at home, before you go to the office, as just as important as anything you do in your day's work at the office. This is **IMPERATIVE**. Slack or slovenly reading of the papers is fatal to a beginner. Get up early enough in the morning to do the job. Concentrate on the local stories that appear to be in your field, figure a possible quick follow. This alertness to the **FOLLOW** is important in afternoon newspaper work. Search for the new angle, the possibility of a fresh news or feature lead. But **READ THE PAPERS**.

3. Although you are probably slated to be a feature writer, start out by getting your story in the lead. Avoid the participle lead, make your getaway in short, simple declarative sentences. Above all, at the start, let them know that you know what **NEWS** is and how to handle it.

4. Hearst afternoon newspapers have a great yen for **SHORT SENTENCES** and **SHORT PARAGRAPHS**, à la Brisbane. Break it up, keep it down to earth, and always try for the touch that will interest everybody at least a little rather than a few people a great deal. After you are securely established you can take your education and your vocabulary and your brains out of the moth balls and don't worry if you don't get a play for them at the start, and don't think that handling



banalities means that you are sentenced forever to merchandising tripe.

5. This one is IMPORTANT. Take due account of this native son touchiness about the New Yorker. Don't let anybody, high or low, get the idea that you are high-hatting them. Tout San Francisco shamelessly. I know you can do this with good conscience and I don't think you will have any trouble on that score. But always remember that the old Coast defenders are unbelievably sensitive about all this.

6. At the start, be a bit of a lone wolf and a bit circumspect about whom you go to lunch with. Big newspapers frequently have a lot of politics loose on the staff and it is important not to get too clubby with anybody at first. This is, of course, cowardly counsel, but it helps to hold jobs and after you get set you will forget all about such craven business.

7. Don't let the happy-go-lucky, barfly San Francisco behavior carry over into your office behavior. Be careful to use the Mister wherever it is rated rather than the first name. If Ed Rosenthal or somebody else has taken you to dinner the night before, don't let that induce you to get chummy with him around the office—go slow in picking up first names. You can do this without being stiff or stuffy or falling into that fatal error of high-hatting anybody.

8. Unless San Francisco has changed, watch for the boom and boost and Golden California angles. The Hearst papers love them.

9. DON'T GET MAD AT THE COPY DESK. Copyreaders are sometimes stupid, but usually they have a pretty good case when they butcher your copy. Don't squawk about it around the office. Just try to get their idea and say nothing.

There is a great deal that I want to tell you about newspaper usage. I will get that off over the week end. This is important in showing the copy desk and city desk that you really know your trade. It is really trivial stuff and after you get going you can quit caring about what you seem to be and just be what you are. Which latter thoroughly satis-

fies your proud parents and here's a go, old darling, and don't think this is Uriah Heep stuff I have been writing.

Lovingly,

LEM.

P.S. You can observe office proprieties without being obsequious.

I didn't know it then but that morning I was going through what Morton Sontheimer, in his book *Newspaperman*, called the "blisters on the buttocks" period.

It was awful. I sat and sat and sat. I had read my paper twice and my fingers were too cold to try to write a letter—even if I had dared. So I sat some more.

Mr. Walker, heading for the water cooler in the corner, seemed to notice me with a start of surprise, and came over to the desk. Expecting to receive an assignment at last (interview the mayor? Explore a murder tip?) I adopted an expression of alert hopefulness.

"Accuracy," he said gloomily. "You've got to learn to be accurate." His tone suggested that although I had not written anything for him yet, he suspected that in the past I had never been accurate, and he despaired of future accuracy on my part. He wandered away but in a few minutes was back with a half-column clipping from a morning paper, an account of a current turkey show in Boyes Springs.

"Boil this down to a few paragraphs. And remember that writing for a newspaper is serious business. A reporter has to be earnest."

Inasmuch as I hadn't cracked a smile for at least twenty-four hours, I felt his injunction unnecessary. To call my current attitude earnest would be an understatement.

It took me half an hour to get the turkeys rounded up. In the back of my mind I kept remembering the story of Watt

Brown, a sour old city editor who once rebuked a clumsy reporter, struggling over his story.

"Jack," he said, "you remind me of an old sheep dog which comes romping in, all over mud and cockleburs, dragging in the leg of a deer. He knows he's got something but he doesn't know what the hell it is."

Walker took my story, read it, grunted an "O.K.," and said I could go to lunch. As no one had volunteered to tell me where anything was, and everyone looked too forbidding or too busy to ask, I blundered around for twenty minutes, looking for the ladies' room. It was a worth-while trip, though—I saw a lot of private offices and art rooms, discovered where the library was, and unearthed a machine which sold eskimo pies. Everything I saw was precise and modern, and I caught no glimpse of Older's ghost.

To my immense surprise the turkey story was actually in the paper, just as I had written it.

Visitors at the last day of the annual western states turkey show at Boyes Springs will have a special treat tonight. The picking of a prize winning turkey and the coronation of a "turkey queen" will take place at a turkey ball given by the Valley of the Moon Turkey Breeders' Association, sponsors of the show.

Winners of the contest—fowl and female—will be the guests of Paul Whiteman at the Palace Hotel Sunday night. Breeders from all the western states are exhibiting prize turkeys in the three day pre-Thanksgiving exposition.

That's San Francisco journalism for you.

I wasn't given any more work all afternoon, but the monotony was broken by Ed Rosenthal, who dropped by to ask how I was doing. I said I didn't know, but what was the matter with all the other reporters . . . was I a leper or something?

"Well, you see," he explained, "for the last three or four years Caroline was the only woman reporter on the paper. She's a swell girl and a good reporter and everybody was crazy about her. So they're bound to resent you."

Well, darn it, it wasn't my fault she was going to have a baby! The way the guys looked at me you'd think it was back at the turn of the century, when Older hired a woman against the feverish protests of his staff. The protests (suppressed but belligerent) swelled to enormous proportions when Older decided that the twilight streets weren't safe for lone women and began assigning young reporters the daily job of seeing Nellie home.

Walker didn't suggest that anyone see me home. But at 4:00 P.M. the assistant city editor indicated that I better get the hell out of the office or the Guild would raise a fuss. I did—fast.

The second day was a different matter entirely. I had barely walked into the office when Walker yelled at me: "Take a cab out to 10000 Divisadero and interview a gal who tried to commit suicide last night, or maybe someone tried to bump her off. Ex-sweetie of Stinky Kelly, indicted ten years ago for corruption. Husband's name is Weiskopf, owns the biggest night club in town. Get going!"

Feeling like something out of *The Front Page*, I grabbed copy paper, jammed on my hat, and got.

"What's the matter, girlie?" the cab driver asked. "You seem kinda nervous."

It was a long drive out to Divisadero Street, so I told him. He was excited and sympathetic.

"Don't you worry, girlie," he said. "I've hacked for lots of reporters, and I'll see you through."

We drew up before a four-story Spanish style apartment

house, in a middle-class residential section. The garage doors were on the street level, and beside them a flight of brick stairs led to the apartment entrances. Seeing that we were far from a taxi stand, I told my new friend to come back in half an hour.

"I'll just wait and see that you get in all right," he said.

It was lucky for me he did. The street was deserted in the early morning fog, curtains drawn at the windows of every house, and the dew lay thick on the grass beside the steps. Shivering with excitement and curious little ripples of fear, I started up the stairs—then stopped dead in horror. On every step, redder than the bricks, stickier than the dew, but still wet, still running, lay puddles of blood. I might not have recognized dried bloodstains, but I couldn't mistake fresh blood, trickling its slow path down a flight of stairs.

"I th-think m-m-maybe you better come here," I called faintly to the cab driver. He came running and sniffed at the blood like one of Legree's hounds.

"It's human, all right," he said in happy awe.

Bolstered by his presence, I rang the bell of the door marked Weiskopf. Nothing happened. I rang again, and Perry Mason or Philo Vance might have detected a slight scraping noise behind the locked door. I wasn't sure I did. The cabby had tiptoed down the steps, following the trail of blood, and after a while I went down to the street again and shook the locked garage doors. From behind the corner of the house the cabby's head popped out.

"Hey, girlie, come here!" he called.

He indicated a window in the side wall of the garage. The glass had been broken, and jagged pieces lay on the grass. There was just room for a body to slip through. Inside the garage was a black car, the door by the driver's

seat open. Faintly I could smell the sweet, sick odor of carbon monoxide.

"I'll climb through and look around," the cabby said.

"No, I'll do it. I guess I should."

Using a folded handkerchief he pulled out the broken pieces of glass from the dried putty, then helped to boost me through the window. My new dress tore on a nail, but I hardly noticed. Inside the garage the gas smell was stronger, and I held my nose while I looked the car over. There was an empty whisky bottle on the front seat, and the keys were still in the ignition lock although the motor was turned off. Bloodstains led from the window to the car, then across the concrete floor to the garage doors. It was easy to see that someone had smashed the window to get in, pulled someone else from the car, and dragged the body outside.

"Hey," called the cabby, "you better get outta dere—but quick!"

I scrambled halfway through the window and stuck again on the malevolent nail. A pale little man was just stepping out of a taxi at the corner. He paid the driver, then turned toward the house, and saw me struggling in the window.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" he snarled.

My blessed cabby reached behind me and freed me from the nail. I dropped to the ground and decided to adopt an airy attitude.

"Just looking around," I said. "Where's your wife?"

It was a guess, but not a difficult one. He was a tough little guy, wiry and tense, and he looked as if he had had a hard night. His right hand was wrapped in a tremendous bandage, the blood already beginning to seep through.

"What's it to you?"

"I'm from the *Call Bulletin*. I want to see her."

"You can't. She's resting." He tried to brush by me, but I



caught at his arm. He jumped as if he were a cat on an electric wire.

"What happened?" Walker had just assigned me to see the wife, but I thought I ought to find out.

"Look," he said, clipping his words with mock patience, "we were on a party last night and we both got stinko. Thelma took the car and came home. She drove into the garage and passed out, with the motor on. I came home awhile later in a taxi, saw what had happened, and pulled her out. That's all."

That *was* all, too. He wouldn't say another word, although I begged, pleaded, and screamed that I had to see Thelma or I would lose my job. He stood on the steps, his cream-colored suede shoes spattering the blood puddles (his or hers? I wondered darkly. Walker had implied he might have been attempting to murder her) and the lines of his face and body grew tighter and tighter. I felt that at any moment he would pull out a razor and start slashing. A curtain moved in the front window of his apartment, and we both caught a glimpse of a bleary brunette, peering at us. He gave me a venomous look, darted up the stairs, and slammed the door. Hating my job of persecution, I rang the bell, over and over, but he wouldn't answer.

Taking a deep breath and thinking grimly of Horace Greeley, Dad, and Hecht and McArthur, I went around the corner and telephoned the Weiskopf apartment. The tough little guy answered the phone.

"Is Thelma there?" I gurgled through my handkerchief over the mouthpiece.

"Who wants to know?"

"Why, this is Rosie Rhoads, an old school chum. I just got in town and I thought I'd look up dear old Thelma."

"She's in Carmel," he said and hung up.



Walker had told me to telephone the office every half-hour. Sadly I called him and said I wasn't having any luck.

"Stick around," he ordered, and he hung up too.

The cab driver offered to buy me a beer, but it was too early in the morning and I was too gloomy. We went back to the apartment house. The bloodstains were still wet. I rang the bell, and this time the little pale man came to the door.

"Hello, Rosie," he said. "We're still not talking."

That was that. I never *did* believe in that handkerchief trick. I called Walker again and he told me to come on in. On the long drive back to the office the cabby poured comforting advice into my ears.

"You gotta be tough," he said, "especially in your racket. And in mine too. You gotta make people know you're the boss, see? Take me—the other night I got a hophead in the cab here. He pulls out a gun and tells me to drive down to the water front. He wants to end it all, he says, and he's gonna take someone with him. That's me—he's gonna have me drive the old bus right in the bay, with him in the back seat holdin' that gun.

"So what do I do? I just keep drivin' around, see, and I keep talkin' to him, in a soothin' tone of voice. And pretty soon, just like I expected, I hear the gat drop to the floor and I look around and see the hoppie's passed out. So I look in his pocket and on a bill I find the address of the joint in Chinatown where he lives, and I take him home and put him to bed. You gotta be tough, girlie, and you gotta let them know you're boss."

My morning with the cab driver cost four dollars, and I only dared put in a two-dollar expense account. But I still think I got two bucks' worth of advice.

Walker didn't seem particularly annoyed when I came

in and tried to explain my failure. I thought he ought to know about the bloodstains and the bandage on Weiskopf's hand, but he cut me short.

"Sure, sure," he said wearily, "we know all about that. We've had reporters out there and down at the hospital since dawn, ever since he pulled her out of that garage where she tried to bump herself off. I knew you wouldn't get in—just wanted you to make him so mad he wouldn't let in any of the sob sisters from the other papers."

Walker was tough, all right, but I learned a lot in a little time. Another city editor, a kinder man, once handed back an effusive story I had written on June brides with the simple words: "This turns my stomach!" Walker, after reading my story on a publicity breakfast with Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen, tossed it to a rewrite man with the loud command: "Write this!"

I was crushed, mostly because the breakfast had been such fun—Scotch and sodas and scrambled eggs aboard the elegant Southern Pacific *Lark*, swirls of drama critics and columnists, my picture taken with Charlie, and a Gay-Nineties flirtation with a white-headed old gentleman who turned out to be the mayor of San Francisco. I tried to write a half-column feature, and it came out three paragraphs of advertisement for Charlie's new movie.

In her biography of Fremont Older, Evelyn Wells records a story about another cub reporter. John Pratt, city editor of the old *Morning Call*, asked Older's advice about a raw cub who baffled them both with his lack of ability. The Salvation Army had just been organized, and Older, a reporter himself at that time, suggested that the cub be assigned to the army's three-week enlistment drive. Pratt followed his suggestion, but at the end of three weeks the

cub produced only two plodding columns. In despair, Pratt called him up to the desk.

"You were with the Salvation Army three weeks, weren't you? Eating and sleeping and singing with them? Now listen! When they came back into the barracks at night, where did they hang the bass drum?"

The cub didn't know, and Pratt fired him. Evelyn Wells says that Older probably told the anecdote to every reporter he hired and always repeated it when he criticized a story for lack of detail.

With the bass drum constantly in mind, I tried to collect every scrap of information about the stories I was sent on during that week. Minor affairs, all of them, but I had the bass drum in everything I wrote, and I was sure that Walker would forget his plan of trying out any more girls. I had learned what "take" and "slug" and a lot more words meant, the other reporters occasionally nodded my way, a couple of Dad's early cronies introduced themselves, and in general, although I never felt quite at ease in the prophylactic city room, I was beginning to catch my breath.

On Friday afternoon Walker sauntered over to my desk and sat down on a corner, swinging one leg gently.

"Your week is up," he said.

I gulped at the stomach blow.

"I told you I was going to try five other girls. You still may have a chance."

And in the meantime?

"You might make a good newspaperwoman some day," he said judicially. "Although you don't seem a particularly brilliant writer."

What does he expect from a \$24-a-week cub?

"You did pretty well," he pondered. "You seem to have

a talent for talking to people, you are pleasant to have around the office, and an ornament in general."

Sugar in the wounds is worse than salt.

"Good-by," he said.

I went into retreat at Carmel for a week, knocking myself out with sun and sea. Still in a daze, I came back to San Francisco and got a job as a receptionist at a flashy business house which turned out first-rate electrical transcriptions and second-rate documentary films. I answered the phone and took letters from busy executives who reminded me of pompous penguins. They were the first real businessmen I had ever met. But nothing mattered. Ambition was dead, and all I wanted was enough money to go on living on Telegraph Hill.

A year later I learned that Walker tried out about fifteen girls and never did find one he considered a brilliant writer. But when the manpower shortage hit the paper he had to give in and hire a flock of women. To them I send greetings.

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*NOTHING'S GOING TO BE THE SAME*

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**S**AN FRANCISCO has many groups, more or less cohesive, but fluid enough to merge sometimes at the edges, and loose enough to tolerate a curious Easterner, if the stranger can adapt to the characteristics of the group. Membership within the circles shifts and changes, but always one person or one place acts as a focus.

There was the castle out on Vallejo Street, and the boys who lived there and their friends made up a very distinctive group. This was a red sandstone edifice, constructed by an eccentric millionaire who apparently had read a lot about castles but probably never saw one. From an iron gate in the high wall along Vallejo you walked up a garden path beside splashing fountains to the great oaken door which creaked open to reveal the mysteries of the castle. Inside was a living room in which, as I remember, the boys could fit a Christmas tree twenty feet tall. The house had all the appurtenances of castlehood: yawning fireplace, overhanging balcony, circular stairs, mullioned windows, narrow slits in the thick walls through which you could shoot at Indians or landlords, a tower room with a ladder which reclusive couples could pull up after them, and on the walls flambeaux for reed torches. Completing the picture, the boys maintained Heidi, the St. Bernard who had turned Vanessi's into a shambles. The membership in the castle might change, Heidi's masters might be holding down two or three jobs at once, parties at the other end of the city

might last all night—but someone always came home to feed Heidi. At the castle, in turn, Heidi was appreciative of anyone who showed up. Timid or bold, friend and stranger were greeted by Heidi's massive forepaws wrapped around their shoulders, and a red tongue the size of a wet briefcase eagerly lapping their face.

Five boys rented the castle for \$125 a month which meant that their rent was cheap enough to afford something special in the way of parties. With one exception the boys all changed in the period when I was familiar with the castle, but their characteristics were the same and I sometimes felt their interests were conditioned partly by their environment. Drama critic, oil salesman, financial columnist, executive of a motion picture distributing company, actor—these were some of the divers occupations they pursued. But in the castle they were samplers of all the arts, and no road show, no touring ballet or symphony came to town without some of its members showing up at the castle. Consequently their parties, as I've said, were something to attend, both from the standpoint of the guests and of the provisions.

But the evening I remember most clearly was a rainy winter night when there were only four of us in the darkened castle. Outside, the black leaves of the rhododendrons, shining in the light from our windows, beat wetly in the windy darkness. Inside, on the floor in front of the glowing fire, we lay on a bear rug, listening sadly to a newsboy's voice as he ran along Vallejo Street, shouting a war extra.

Two of the boys were in uniform, and the others expected to be called shortly, although America was not yet at war. As the newsboy's voice faded into the storm we talked for a while of youth and war, of plans and readjustments, of marriage and death. We argued a little about pacificism and patriotism but nothing came of the argument

but a shared hopelessness. Clay finally wandered over to the phonograph and squatted beside the gaily-colored books of records, dangling one black disk and then another from his bony fingers, searching the mood.

Grieg's *Concerto in A Minor* swelled through the great room, beating against our eardrums as we lay with heads pillowed on our arms. Outside, beyond the rain, beyond the bay, beyond the ocean's horizon, I could see the young faces drowning, bodies rising and falling in the sea swell, eyes open, lashes wet, staring at me.

Clay turned a record and the room came back, shadowy, secure, complete. Beside me Heidi lay twitching in dreams, and her shaggy coat was warm from the heat of the fire. I buried my hand in her hair and held on tight.

A second San Francisco group, slightly more flamboyant than the devious "castle crowd," revolved about an ethereal blonde who looked like a Pre-Raphaelite and was doing her best to overcome a middle-west background by acting like the blessed damozel. She was the only girl in the group, and its character can best be explained by the simple statement that Christina (as I might as well call her) was known among the irreverent as The Faery Queene.

During the ballet season the most amusing part of the show took place out in the sparkling lobby of the San Francisco Opera House. This was the moment when Christina and her coterie of twittering young men swept up the stairs and into the lobby. Christina, dazzling in white chiffon and a long white ermine coat, would walk proudly across the lobby, a pale hand resting lightly on the arms of the two honored escorts of the evening. Behind them would trail eight or ten bright-eyed lads, their cheeks flushed with excitement, their delicate bodies bending this

way and that to pick out other friends in the lobby crowd, all of them tinkling with whispers and malicious giggles like crystals in the chandeliers.

I knew Christina and her crowd well enough to have a drink with them during the ballet intermissions, to join them on the beach at Carmel if we should happen to meet on a week end, and to be invited to some of her parties. The regular parties were always bizarre and rather fun (if the boys behaved themselves, which they usually did) and the costume parties were utterly and fantastically beautiful. Christina lived in a big flat far out in the Western Addition, that very respectable part of San Francisco which stretches out toward the sea, but with the use of her friends' natural talents for decoration and her own taste (and I might add money) she had transformed the uninspired flat into a kind of underwater dream image.

The walls were covered with gold paper, and great mirrors, their silver flecked by time, reflected the candle-lighted golden highlights. An enormous grand piano, very black in the dim light, stood in one corner of the room, and ancient iron candelabra dripped the white wax of altar candles onto the black floor. Against this background Christina's friends delighted to exhibit their talent for devising the weird costumes that always made one feel there was unicorn horn powder mixed in the drinks. I remember Osmond, a slim young artist with a dancer's figure . . . a union suit, dyed holly-berry red, coated his body like paint from ankles to neck. His bare feet, his hands, his neck and face were greased ebony black, splotches of bright green circled his eyes, and a circle of gold was painted on either cheek. On his head he wore a black stocking-cap, crowned with an inverted head of crinkly green lettuce.

I took Lucile to one of these parties and she went home



in hysterics. The way I figured it, she was such an ultra-normal person that any irregularity frightened and disturbed her. She threw herself on the couch and cried for an hour.

"How can you stand them?" she sobbed.

I couldn't, for very long and en masse, but I made some good friends in Christina's group. And I always wanted to send her a wreath of rosemary for the exquisite way she invented a character and background for herself and never stepped out of it. Awhile ago I heard that her distressed Chicago parents had stopped her allowance and that Christina had gotten a job driving a delivery truck, of all things. This bothered me for several months, but a recent letter reports that one hot day Christina drove out to Golden Gate Park, stripped off her clothes, and took a sun bath on the roof of the truck. The police intervened, Christina was fired, and now she's back in her gold-papered flat all day. She hocked the ermine coat, my informant tells me, but expects her allowance to start again, any day.

These were only two of the groups. There were many others—some sharply defined, some fluctuating and shadowy. There were the older and successful writers and painters, who lived grandly in functional modern houses, but sometimes turned up (for old time's sake, I guess) at Izzy Gomez' bistro. There were the communists, earnest Launcelots who were working hard at war jobs long before Pearl Harbor. They tossed fine, hearty parties, but always with an entrance fee. There were the milder young radicals, who knew the words of all the left-wing songs, but took the time to practice modern dancing steps at Letitia Innes' studio, down near the famous old Montgomery Block. There were newspapermen and singers, poets and government workers, truck drivers and even an occasional stock broker.

They met and mingled and laughed and talked according to their interests, almost never according to their occupations. It was like a small town, I suppose, but they were not small-town people.

Always, in every group, there was music. The West, almost from the earliest days, has been music-conscious, and it hasn't changed. It wasn't a love of music that demonstrated itself in playing in amateur quartets, or singing English and Tennessee ballads, the way we did in the East, but rather in knowledge and receptive appreciation of classical music. At one time, I learned, there were one hundred opera houses between Denver and San Francisco. I'm sure there aren't that many now, but there are plenty of other musical functions, and if we were too broke to go, we could stay home and listen to records. Everyone seemed to have a good collection.

In lighter moments our evening excursions were conditioned by the kind of music we were in the mood for. To the Xochimilco when we wanted to hear Mexican music as it should be played. To the Gay Nineties on the old Barbary Coast for schmaltz. The Tahitian Hut down near the water front provided the excitement of a Hawaiian war-drum dance (no cover charge here, either), and when we felt really exotic we would drop into the Mandarin Theater in Chinatown to hear the sing-song eighth notes.

Out at Jack's, in the Negro-Japanese section of town, we listened for hours to Saunders King and his men, giving out with the hot stuff. Most of the girls in town had a yen for Johnny Cooper, the handsome part-Hawaiian pianist, but besides that attraction the band was really good. Hot music has always sounded to me rather like the irate cook throwing the fire irons and saucepans at the duchess and her sneezing baby in *Alice* (and especially like the chorus to

the duchess' song: Wow! Wow! Wow!), but when Saunders King sang "Big Fat Butterfly" I knew the hot fans really had something. Around the corner there was more of the same at the Club Alabam, a real dive with a sign over the bar: "No whores or any other kind of prostitutes allowed here."

In the Club Alabam or in Christina's gilded aquarium, in the studios and rabbit warrens of Telegraph Hill, conversation ran almost exclusively to the arts. It was the conversation of Bohemia, perhaps (although we loathed the word), but even in the more intellectual homes of my relatives and their friends I found that a discussion of housing projects was the nearest conversation ever came to sociology.

All of my life at home I had been inundated with economics, science, sociology, and history. In my passionately aesthetic adolescence I had gratefully escaped at bedtime to the secret delights of reading Keats by flashlight, concealed under a tent of heavy blankets. Once I fell asleep with the flashlight on, burned a hole in the sheets, and was ignominiously revealed to my parents as a bedtime-cheater. With the flashlight gone, I went on reading Keats by the light of a street lamp which fell through my window. I think now that I mostly liked the feeling of staying up late. I still do.

I finally developed a system of blanking out my mind, during the heavy-hitting discussions of war and depressions, which worked beautifully. So beautifully in fact that when I had to take Economics I in college my mind kept playing its fading tricks, and I flunked the course flat in the first semester. Except for the disgrace at home I didn't mind, because it meant I could take Greek Drama instead of economics during the second semester, and I certainly found

Aeschylus and Aristophanes far more thrilling than hedging, the law of diminishing returns, and the function of the Stock Exchange, which I never could begin to understand. (Dad used to try to explain it: "Suppose you wanted to start a lemonade stand and you didn't have enough money but your friend Joan came along with some money . . ." I didn't understand that either, and although I tried to follow him step by step I was always hampered by the fact that I never had the slightest desire to start a lemonade stand).

Anyway, San Francisco conversation seemed at first the fulfilment of my dreams. Poetry, music, art, these were our subjects, far more real, far more important than various systems of government, any presidential speech, any talk of free trade or world markets. Even the recurring discussions of personalities amused me, and I used to marvel at the way Californians could spend hours analyzing the manners and morals of absent friends.

Nevertheless, the world catches up to you, even in Arcadia. Things kept happening "out there" (as we always thought of any territory east of the Rockies), and I couldn't ignore them. England besieged and Russia invaded, persecution in Europe and the spreading poison of racial prejudice in America, the growing power of reactionaries in Washington, our State Department and Vichy . . . but it all seemed very far away, very unreal, even for me, who daily endured the shoddy San Francisco newspapers with their front page exclamation marks. For my friends, who never looked at a paper, never listened to a radio broadcast, or read one of the Eastern news magazines, these problems hardly existed. They seemed to move through a timeless dream, and although the daily papers shook me and made

me long for the heavy-hitting political discussions I had once scorned, I was still willing to share the dream.

Pete joined the Air Forces and was sent up to Hamilton Field, some twenty miles north of San Francisco. I was not too sorry to see him go, although I frankly admitted that he had provided an illuminating and often delightful introduction to a certain species of California male. But it was rather like the travelogues when the commentator says: "And so with sad hearts we say good-bye to lovely Tasmania. . . ." You know we aren't really sad—it may have been a nice trip, and all that, but it's even nicer to get back to familiar country, where people speak your own language. Pete spoke the language of love to perfection, but when the world is cracking to pieces and half your mind is on the daily news, it's the bilingual man who holds your interest.

One December morning, with the sun washing over my bed and the crisp air blowing the smell of eucalyptus through the open window, I awoke late, stretched and yawned luxuriously with the sleepy happiness of waking up in San Francisco, and switched on the radio for music to suit my mood. And there it was—springing from my radio with the ugliness of a long-bottled demon.

"Pearl Harbor," the announcer panted. "Oahu . . ." I had never heard of Pearl Harbor or Oahu, but when he said Hawaii I knew what it meant. I ran to the phone and called up Charles Stuart.

"Charles!" I cried. "They've bombed Oahu!"

"Where the hell is that?" he asked sleepily.

"In Ha-Hawaii," I stuttered. "They'll probably be bombing us next! Somehow Hawaii seems awfully close to the

West Coast when you've been hearing people talking about "dropping over to the islands for a week."

"Come on over and have a beer," Charles said. "This is probably the end of everything . . . nothing's going to be the same from now on."

On the way over to Charles' I met Vicky Pike, her blond roommate Pauly, and some of their friends. They hadn't been listening to the radio and I told them the news. The others stood in stunned silence, their mouths gaping open, but Pauly was always equal to any occasion. In an Edith Cavell attitude she leaned against the white wall of a corner building, stretched out her arms in supplication, and raised her face toward heaven.

"Oh, beautiful for spacious skies," she whispered throatily.

Somehow Pauly's self-conscious pose symbolized for me San Francisco's reaction during the following weeks. The city always was dramatic, of course, but now its reaction seemed all drama and very little substance. We had several two- and three-hour blackouts during the first week, and as far as I could see everyone loved them. They found that conversation in a pitch-dark room grows easier and more intimate, and that danger is titillating as well as frightening. Everyone rushed out to get glamorous civilian defense jobs, and I too was drawn into a mass of red (cross) tape, until I decided that San Francisco wasn't going to be bombed after all.

The papers were full of pictures of what you should carry in a blackout—flashlight, rope, knife, scissors, emergency bandages. Dutifully I gathered these items, but I only used them once. At three one morning, I leapt out of bed when the siren blew, tore into my blue jeans and my dirty old sneakers, put on a red turtle-neck sweater and the

jacket of a ski suit, looped the rope to my belt, stuffed the scissors, knife, and bandages in various pockets, and as an afterthought tucked in a lipstick and a dollar bill. Then, not knowing what else to do, and damning Lucile for going to Yosemite for the week end, I called up Val, the girl who lived in a garden apartment around the corner.

"Come on down," she said. "Jean is here and Charles and Bob are coming over."

Weighed down with paraphernalia, but feeling competent for any emergency, I groped my way down to her house and stumbled into the candlelit room. Bob and Charles were already there, complete with a jug of red wine, and Jean and Val were very much there. Val wore a pink taffeta hostess gown with a little pink ribbon in her hair, and Jean looked frail and feminine in a trailing white negligee. And there was I, looking like a bloated lumberjack.

The warden came along and made us put the candles out—this was still early in the war and the wardens had not experienced as yet the rush of Western blood to the head which caused them, a little later on, to shoot out all obstinate bulbs and candles. Val and I stood at the French window, and when some Navy boys she knew passed by she introduced me to them.

"You must be an Englishman," one of them said politely. "I've never heard Margaret used as a man's first name in America."

In that ludicrous outfit it seemed kind of embarrassing to say "I'm a lady." So I casually turned sideways and a moment later in the faint starlight saw his eyes pop and had the satisfaction of a muttered apology before he beat a quick retreat. The next day I went shopping and bought a pale blue negligee, for use in blackouts.





San Francisco was frightened of bombs and fires of course, and so was I, for awhile. I was also frightened in another way. I remembered the stories Mother and Dad told of the vicious and intolerant attitude which gripped America during the First World War, of suspicious and petty persecution. I thought often of the Casper Milquetoast copyreader Dad once told me about.

He was a timid and harmless little guy, and he suffered the shame of a German name. Every morning the paper's managing editor, a pompous patriot, would stalk up to Casper, shake a finger under his nose, and demand in a belligerent roar: "Under what flag?"

For almost four years the copyreader endured this never-varying question, always replying meekly, "America, sir," when the managing editor boomed "Under what Flag?"

When the Armistice came Casper breathed freely again and dared to take his German name in search of another job. One day, at a bar across the street from the paper he ran into the managing editor. Out of force of habit the m.e. shook his finger and began. "Under what—" Casper slapped his hand aside.

"Listen, you bastard," he said, "I've been waiting four long years to tell you it isn't 'Under *what* flag?', it's 'Under *which* flag?'"

Then there was the story of Father York, a fiery little priest and the leader of the Irish in San Francisco at the time of the "trouble." Because the Irish, then as now, refused to take an active part in the war, Father York was carefully watched by Federal detectives, and he knew it.

At a big mass meeting of all the Irish in San Francisco, Father York advanced to the center of the platform and

peered out at the seething audience. His brogue was never richer or his voice more gently ironic as he spoke:

"I am quite aware," he said, "that we're honored tonight by the presence of many Federal detectives. Now I want all these gentlemen to get out their little pads of paper and to make sure their little pencils are quite sharp, because my speech tonight is going to be very, very seditious. Are you ready, gentlemen?"

For the next two hours, accompanied by roaring applause from the delighted Irish, Father York delivered an impassioned and seditious address—in Gaelic.

No one else seemed particularly concerned about mob hysteria or unjust persecution, and it took me several months to realize that their unconcern was justified. Wars change and people change, and this time San Franciscans seemed more interested in learning about splints and bandages and discussing how the war would affect the city than they did in changing the names of streets and cabbages. And after a while conversation veered from talk of excursions and alarms back to the ballet, the symphony, the Picasso show at the Museum, and I was lulled.

TOO lulled. The yellow acacias were dropping their soft flowers on the sidewalks where I walked, the war hadn't taken many men yet, I was learning to run a projection machine at the photo and recording studio—and suddenly the old uneasiness came welling up again.

Tom Mooney's funeral brought it to a head. I didn't really want to go—I had never been to a funeral before—but I knew that Mother and Dad would have gone. On the one hand were my friends, sun-bathing on a roof garden. On the other was the remembrance of long years of growing up in a household in which the name Tom Mooney carried an emotional wallop second only to the names Dreyfus and Sacco and Vanzetti. I knew, of course, that Mooney in himself was not a great man, that he was petty, vindictive, and rather stupid. But Dad had been in San Francisco at the time of the Preparedness parade bombing; in subsequent months and years he had access to all the ugly documents which proved the perjury of witnesses against Mooney; with Fremont Older he became convinced of Mooney's innocence, and until we left San Francisco he worked with the local committee which fought hard and vainly for Mooney's freedom.

One of Dad's best friends in those days was a witty Irishman named Tom O'Connor, who served as one of Mooney's first lawyers, and Dad used to tell a curious story explaining

in part why Tom ran into so much opposition in his efforts on Mooney's behalf.

The story involved one Louis Hartog (it's just as well that I've forgotten his real name) who at that time was San Francisco's most prominent lawyer. Pigeon-breasted, pearl-vested, bespatted, perfumed with Florida Water, Lou was the central figure in every city function, the main speaker at all Kiwanis or chamber of commerce banquets, the man whose pronouncements were sought by the newspapers on every occasion. Nor was Lou just a dignified dummy—he was pals with the mayor and all the local politicians, and he wielded a lot of power.

Late one night Tom got a frantic telephone call from Mrs. Hartog.

"Tom," she said, "Lou hasn't been home in two days, and I'm scared to death something has happened to him. Will you try to find him?"

Tom got dressed and started combing the city. Toward dawn he located Lou, huddled in a room at one of his clubs, bleary-eyed and shivering with terror.

"Thank God you've come, Tom!" he exclaimed. "I didn't dare phone—the police are after me. Two days ago a cop down at the station called up and said he wanted to see me. I didn't have time to tell my wife—just lit out and came down here."

"What have they got on you, Lou?"

The great man wailed with terror, and his gross body shook the little cot.

"I don't know, Tom! It might be anything—the cop didn't say, and I've got a feeling that this time I can't fix it. There was that girl in Sacramento—she was only fifteen. I paid her off, but you know how women are. In that Shuster case I passed a lot of dough to the jury, and someone may have

squealed. Or they may have picked up the doctor in the abortion mill down on Market Street—if the damned fool kept any records they'll find I set him up in business. Oh, and there was that witness that disappeared five years ago. Of course I didn't do the job myself, but. . . ."

For three hours, feeling in his abject fright that if Tom knew all the illegal deals the police might have against him, he could somehow call off the chase, Lou confessed to every crime on the blotter. Arson, murder, bribery, everything—complete with names and dates.

Tom went downstairs and bought a bottle of whisky. He tossed it at the quaking Lou and put on his hat.

"Here," he said contemptuously, "get drunk on this while I go out and find out what the police have on you."

He locked Hartog in the room and took a cab to the police station. Once there he resumed his Irish geniality the boys knew so well, and he strolled casually through every bureau and department in the station, passing the time of day.

"Hello there, Mike, just dropped by to get a fishing license. . . . How're the wife and kids?"

"They're swell, Tom! And how're yours?"

"Fine, Mike, just fine. . . . Going to the clambake?" And more of the same. Then, almost as an afterthought: "Oh, by the way, you weren't looking for my friend Lou Hartog, were you?"

"Not me, Tom. Fine fellow Lou is, though."

It was the same all through the big station. Nobody was looking for Lou Hartog. Then, going down the steps onto Kearny Street, Tom ran into old Sergeant Kelly.

"Oh, say, Tom," said the Sergeant, "I been lookin' for your friend Lou—can't seem to find him."

"Yes?" asked Tom cautiously.

"Yeah. . . . I found his Pekingese, the little dog his wife lost about two weeks ago. Lou offered a reward, you know. Didn't want his wife to know about it till the dog was found, so I didn't tell him on the phone. I'm keepin' it for him out in our back yard."

Tom went back to the club and up to Lou's room. Cowering in a corner, Lou looked up at Tom with bloodshot eyes. Half the bottle of whisky was gone.

"What've they got on me, Tom?" he whispered.

"Stand up and take it like a man!" Tom sneered, pulling Lou to his feet by his coat lapels.

"They've found your cur, you son of a bitch!" he shouted. Roughly he shoved Lou back on the couch and stormed from the room.

Thereafter Lou Hartog was Tom's implacable enemy. In courtrooms, police precincts, barrooms, newspaper offices, and living rooms he spread poison against Tom O'Connor's name, and because Tom was defending Mooney, Lou did everything in his power to injure Mooney's cause. And he could do a great deal.

Because of all this background of Mooney legend I went to his funeral. I went alone because I could find no one among my friends who was at all impressed by the death of a symbol. The Civic Auditorium was packed with five thousand persons and I was interested to see that except for one or two of the young members of San Francisco's left-wing group, there was scarcely a person in that whole crowd who appeared to be my age. Most of the audience were men, weather-beaten, tough, with gray hair and fine fighting faces. Some of them brought their families, and the children passed by the gold coffin in excited reverence, standing on tiptoe to peer briefly at the waxen figure on its incongruous white satin bed.

Of the many speakers I remember only Warren K. Billings, Harry Bridges, and another who said: "Tom Mooney had the strength that comes only to one who loves a cause more than he loves himself." Closing the services, the People's Chorus sang "Joe Hill":

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,  
Alive as you or me,  
Said I, "but Joe, you're ten years dead!"  
"I never died," said he,  
"I never died," said he.

Tingling with emotion and filled for the first time with a deep conviction that the people I had seen that morning would somehow, sometime, work out a just and peaceful world, I went back to Telegraph Hill, back to the party on the roof garden.

To my surprise Pete was there, evidently in town on his first week end. I hadn't seen him in uniform before, and he looked so dazzling that I was tempted to revise my decision about bilingual men. The others sprawled awkwardly in their deck chairs but Pete fitted into his with all the easy grace of a sleepy tiger—an admirable talent. We grinned hello, and as Lucile moved over on the balustrade to make room between the geranium pots, it occurred to me that perhaps I had been a little casual about the whole Pete question.

I forgot him, though, when someone asked me about the funeral. Eagerly I launched into a description, trying to convey the emotion that I had felt. The eight people were silent as I talked, half-smiles on their lips. When I stopped, no one said anything for a minute and then Sherman Shawn, an ex-banker converted into a Navy lieutenant, spoke up.

"Too bad they ever let that guy out of jail," he said.

"But he was innocent!"

"Oh, well, even if he was, he was a dangerous agitator. All those people ought to be locked up."

Toby Insull, a rich young Bostonian who lived in notorious depravity in one of the most elegant apartments on the Hill, chimed in:

"Too much sentimentality about all those labor guys," he said. "Mooney was probably guilty as hell, just like those rats Sacco and Vanzetti."

On her perch beside me I could feel Lucile bristling but I knew she never tangled in one of these dogfights. Pete took a long drag at his bottle of Green Dragon ale and went on looking at the bay with half-closed eyes. But the rest of them nodded agreement with Toby's remarks. For a moment I stared at them, my mouth gaping. I knew, of course, that such bitter and stupid prejudice existed but naively it had never occurred to me that the people I sat around with, drank beer with, could believe the things these people seemed to believe.

Managing to pull myself together, I told them of the photograph someone had taken of Mooney and his wife on the rooftop of a building blocks away from the explosion. A jeweler's clock in the background, across the street, proved conclusively that they could not have had time to plant the fatal suitcase and get to the rooftop at the time shown on the clock's face. There was other evidence, I knew, but to my consternation I couldn't remember the exact facts and facts were the only weapons I could use against these people.

"All labor unions should be prohibited by law," announced Scudder Bent, a chuckle-chinned young man who ran an office which attempted to mediate between San



Francisco employers and the powerful San Francisco unions. Scudder was only a casual acquaintance, but I had already discovered his mathematical mind containing innumerable statistics and apparently incontrovertible facts.

"They're all led by corrupt and stupid Jews," said Scudder, voicing the first anti-Semitic sentiment I had ever heard in the West. "Don't they know that the scale of living goes up as wages are increased?"

I realized then that with my inadequate knowledge of history and economics I had no right to take on these people. Perhaps they weren't worth arguing with but I was ashamed and desperate when I forced myself to accept the fact that I had derived most of my economic beliefs from my parents, that I still believed them to be true, but that my beliefs rested on faith, while my parents' rested on a background of thirty years' study and experience.

Pete stood up and stretched lazily.

"Don't be so serious about it, Moggie," he yawned. "What the hell does it matter whether Sacco and Vanzetti and Mooney were guilty or innocent? Who cares? It doesn't pay to get serious about anything."

Deftly he lifted the cap from another bottle of ale, lay back again in the deck chair, closed his eyes and yawned. I stood up, shaking wind-blown geranium petals from my skirt.

"Good-by," I said. "I have things to do."

I fled and behind me I could hear the Navy lieutenant telling the others what wonderful things Franco had done for Spain.

In the sanctuary of my shack I scrawled a letter to Dad, pleading for a list of the books which he considered important in the shaping of his total philosophy. Within a few days I received this letter:

Dearest Margaret:

Without any preliminary wind-up, I will proceed to the overdue business in hand.

Probably the best bird's-eye book, taking a look at all this with a canny eye, was given to me by my own daughter—*The Rise of American Civilization* by Charles and Mary Beard. As you know, it's bulky and you might want to pick some special chapters. For instance, the chapter on imperialism is the best round-up on our ventures in that direction that you could possibly find.

Aside from the book having broad historical scope, it links political history and economics, from the days of early British mercantilism on down. If your generation feels that it needs a bridge over into a new economic interpretation of history, without Marxian or other dogma, this is right on your target.

Another book in the same zone, and I think excellent and informative, is *International Politics* by Dr. Frederick L. Schuman, professor of politics at Williams, published in 1937. Here again you may want to skip a bit, as the entire book is a big order. The chapter on "The United States and the World Disorder" is alone worth the price of admission.

Also *Freedom Versus Organization* by Bertrand Russell, which I regard as one of the great books of my time—in the above field.

In my early youth when the saloon free-lunch counter was a lifesaver for starveling reporters, I used to observe that the true eclectics always were around the free-lunch counter, while the fat burghers wolfed the table d'hôte lunch of tripe, pig's knuckles, headcheese, etc. Bums, spear-ing a pickle, always seemed to have that gravely fastidious touch which Charlie Chaplin caught so nicely. At any rate I never liked tables d'hôte, perhaps because of my early saloon conditioning, and I hope that my book suggestions won't suggest anything like that to you. I think that anyone who puts emphasis on humane, rather than institutionalized or formalized, culture, as you do, is instinctively, and to my great rejoicing, an eclectic. So I am rather hoping

that you won't feel that you must "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" these books. Much of your pleasure and profit will come from keeping your own critical faculty very much alive.

I have a lot more books to suggest but I'll ease them along, lest they choke you. And the professor will also venture a brief outline of what goes on in these latter days. I won't try to tell you what to think. But I will suggest a few things to look for—like the botanist or birdman at a summer camp. I will also try to boil down a few harsh, hard, ineluctable facts, jagged ones, like a broken beer bottle, so you can defend yourself in the clinches.

Margaret, you make me happy . . . but I must stuff in the warning not to forget the aesthetic when you pack your duffel bag for a trip through the arid desert of economics and political history. But I know you won't. All our love,  
Dad.

Armed with Dad's suggestions and a fresh card admitting me to the Mechanics-Mercantile Library—a library that specializes in scientific and technological subjects, but it does all right in other fields—I began my reeducation with high hopes and bursting enthusiasm. Lucile, who for the moment had tired of modern dancing and men, decided that she wanted to do some reading too, and for three nights we primly refused all invitations and sat home by the fire, taking turns reading Beard out loud. On the fourth night Lucile weakened and went out with Toby Insull, who made up in money what he lacked in grace. They came back late. I had a violent argument with Toby about American policies in North Africa and found that my three-day reading on the colonial period hadn't as yet improved my store of facts concerning the modern world.

"One good thing to remember is this," Dad wrote consolingly, "any knowledge of or interest in social or cultural forces is a peculiar, specialized acquirement, like playing

the ukulele, and of course a ukulele player wouldn't get mad at people who couldn't play. But naturally he's badgered and bewildered if they say they can play better than he can, when they can't play at all."

Yes, but I couldn't play the ukulele either.

What with the distraction of our jobs, of people dropping in every evening, of the phone ringing, and the perpetual enticement of the California outdoors in summer—or any time—Lucile and I decided that our snatches of reading time should be augmented by the regularity of some kind of course. From one of her bright young men, Lucile had learned of a labor school, which was supposed to give courses in just the sort of subjects in which we were interested.

One dark night—I in one of the white linen dresses I stubbornly wore during the summer, although San Francisco girls all wore light woollens and fur jackets—we climbed the wooden stairs to the school, and in a room filled with posters begging us to become shipyard workers, we signed up for *The History of the American Negro*. Twelve lectures, \$.50 a lecture. Except for the students, the class took me right back to college. Most of our classmates apparently came directly from work in dungarees and heavy leather jackets. Some of them even carried carpenter tools and other mysterious instruments. One girl cradled a blowtorch in her arms as she listened to a discussion of the Dred Scott case.

As a matter of fact I was fascinated by the place and by the students, as I was by the professor, and for four weeks I went faithfully. Then one day Martin Leuer, who lived kitty-corner up the street from my shack, told me that he and his wife were having a series of talks on Mexico at their house. The speaker was Professor Paul

Radin, one of *the* authorities, and all in all it was going to be pretty exciting. The talks came the same night the course on the American Negro was held, so I dropped out of the labor school and concentrated on Mexico. Anyway, Lucile told me she'd heard the FBI was watching the school and, although I am as innocent as Desdemona, I've always been scared of policemen. Lucile kept on with the course for a few more lectures but after a while she took up with one of the students, a riveter from Brazil, and they played hooky so often she didn't dare go back for the final sessions and the examination.

The Mexican lectures concluded and although I was now in possession of some curious facts about the Aztecs and the Mayans, plus a fragmentary understanding of the Negro problem, neither subject seemed to be quite what I was aiming for. With a flash of wry intuition, I admitted to myself that I had picked up a couple of trick chords for the ukulele, instead of plugging along at basic technique. So I went back to the Beard and the Schuman, and one evening I astounded myself by turning down a party invitation in favor of Beard and Imperialism. My reward came a few days later when, by a vote of hands, I won an argument with the chuckle-chinned statistician.

I TALKED my way from the reception desk of the photo and recording studio into the photography department, and after I had pulled a sufficient number of prints from the drying machine and had demonstrated an abysmal ignorance of lettering, I was allowed to try my hand at a script on the enormous new housing project at Vallejo, across the bay from San Francisco. Leanore, who lived near me on the Hill, was an enthusiastic housing expert, as are a great many San Franciscans, and she took me to a couple of meetings of the Telesis Club, a group of young architects and designers interested in planning for modern living. Slide films of redwood houses and Rio de Janeiro skyscrapers weren't very helpful, but I picked up the names of some good books on housing, and for several weeks I was up to my ears in soundproofing, sun requirements, garbage disposal, and kitchen and dining units.

Just as I finished the script and decided that I was going to be the female Orson Welles of the future, the whole establishment practically blew up under my feet in conferences, hurried trips to Washington, chatter about priorities on film, and general hell to pay. Slightly dazed, I found myself out on the street again, looking for a job. It was beginning to get monotonous, but at least I knew the ropes by this time. I pulled a few and relaxed until the bells rang.

Margery King, a redheaded friend of Leah's, and a charming screwball if there ever was one, worked in a dusty mad-



house which spasmodically turned out pottery flower-girl vases, weird plates, and contorted ashtrays for the Eastern gift shops. I joined her in the madhouse, and for several happy weeks I extracted carioca dancers from their plaster casts in exchange for discarded unbaked plates, which I was allowed to glaze and decorate after my fashion. Later on they came in very handy as Christmas presents.

One of my job-ropes was the *Examiner's* drama critic, who fortunately had not been permanently scarred by the adventure of Heidi and the redhead at Vanessa's. One day he called up to report that Eddie McQuade, the city editor, wanted to see me. With my Walker conditioning I was somewhat skittish when I went in to see Mr. McQuade, but much to my surprise he turned out to be a nice guy. To my further surprise, he hired me.

The day I started on the *Examiner*, my father, three thousand miles away, went to the hospital with a heart ailment. That morning Mother telephoned to tell me it was nothing serious and to wish me good luck on the new job. With her comforting assurances, and feeling vaguely that I was carrying on for Dad while he was laid up, I began with a high heart.

The *Examiner's* rattletrap city room differed from the *Call's* antiseptic chambers in the same way a battling old Airedale differs from a manicured Pekingese. Rosy reporters with whisky noses wore their hats on the back of bald heads, while they tapped out a story against the deadline. Paper littered the floor ankle deep, and the photographers played backgammon in the art department just beyond the copy desk. Pressmen wandered through the room in greasy overalls, and the hoarse cry of "Co-py!" sounded continually above the general bedlam. Dad had worked briefly in



this same city room thirty years ago, and when I looked at the scores of ragged clippings, brown with time, pasted on the dirty gray walls, I decided that not even a fresh coat of paint had changed the room since that time.

I had never seen anything like this before, but I was immediately at ease in this informal madhouse, with its friendly inmates. And although I had had only a week's previous newspaper experience, even the work seemed familiar, and I was no longer frightened and unsure. I had no big stories, of course, but I enjoyed what they gave me—an interview with a forest fire fighter; luncheons at the Commonwealth Club, where I discovered that not *all* business men are pompous penguins; things like that.

At the end of the first week Eddie McQuade called me up to the desk, and I quivered with apprehension. I had never felt this way about a job before—that I wanted to do it more than I wanted to do anything else. I couldn't bear it if—

"We're going to train you the way new reporters should be trained," he said gently. "You've had a week to get onto the hang of things in the office. You'll spend the next week out at City Hall, where you'll learn something about covering courtrooms and find out how we get the news on divorces and wills. The other beat out there takes in the mayor and the Board of Supervisors, but the guy on it is too busy to take you on right now.

"After that, you'll come back to the office for another week, and then we'll send you down to the Hall of Justice so you can find out how police news is covered. After another week in the office you'll go out with some district man and learn how he works. Then we'll bring you back permanently. How does it sound?"

"Swell," I said. "A good system."

"That's what we think. Most reporters have only a vague idea of the jobs outside the office. This way they really learn how a newspaper works, and they can always pinch-hit in an emergency on any of the beats."

It was wonderful to feel I was being trained for a job and was actually being paid for it. And for a week I didn't do any real work—I just attached myself to Helen Hoover, the City Hall girl, and watched her work and learned the names of twenty-eight workers at the Hall. We walked miles—in and out of long rows of courtrooms, down flights of stairs, and into the city clerk's offices where we studied the new records of marriages, divorces, wills filed for probate. Then, as part of our beat, we'd stroll across the wide City Center plaza with its thousands of fluttering pigeons and gulls, to call on the various offices in the Federal Building.

My favorite port of call there was a cubbyhole belonging to one of the investigators in the Narcotics Division. The room looked like an Oriental den, and on the wall, in corner cases and shelves, he had arranged various trophies of the dope trade—pipes, needles, false heels, and wigs, and even an artificial finger used for carrying the stuff by a four-fingered peddler. The trade still flourishes in San Francisco, but it's nothing to what it used to be.

When Dad was on the *Examiner*, back before the First World War, he ran smack into a dope story, and it turned out to be one of the strangest stories he ever covered. Whenever I went into the investigator's office in the Federal Building, I used to think about it and wonder at the mystery of its abrupt end.

One morning, while Dad was shaving and Mother was scrambling eggs, the telephone rang in their apartment on Russian Hill. Still in his undershirt, razor in hand, Dad answered.

"Hello?"

"Sutter 0000? This is an operator on the central telephone switchboard calling. Two minutes ago a girl at Sutter 0001 started to call a number, and before I could complete the call I heard her moan and then I couldn't hear anything else. Your number is next to hers, so I called you, and checking addresses I see you live right across the street. I think someone should go see if she's dead."

Mother heard Dad's laconic, "Yep, yep. O.K.," and the growing excitement in his voice as he repeated the address. He slammed the receiver back on the hook, grabbed his coat, and with the lather still on his face, dashed out of the house without a word.

In the big apartment house across the street he pressed the bell marked Marshall. There was no answer. He tried to get the janitor, but that too was in vain. Noting the number of the apartment, he went out again, and around to the fire escape. After a Douglas Fairbanks leap he caught the lower rung, and a minute later he was peering through the fourth-floor window, at the figure of a girl on a disordered bed. He smashed the window, undid the catch, and climbed in.

The girl lay across the bed, one arm stretched toward the dangling telephone receiver. Her head hung over the edge, and her bright auburn hair fell straight to the carpet. She wore a filmy black lace nightgown, and her flesh was almost translucent. She was dead.

Dad looked through the apartment. There was no one there, and the front door was locked. He didn't think she'd been murdered. There were no marks on the body.

He replaced the telephone receiver. Beside the instrument lay a copy of Rossetti's poems, opened to *The Blessed Damsel*, and on one of the pages was a little card, with

a telephone number. Next to the book was a silver-filigreed box, and in it was a tiny twist of paper containing some white powder. Dad looked at it a minute, put it back in the box, pocketed the card with the telephone number. Then he called his office, gave them as much of the story as he had, and called the police.

When he checked later with the police, his suspicions were confirmed. The medical examiner told him Beatrice Marshall had died of an overdose of cocaine.

Dad went back to the apartment, told Mother what had happened ("It was the most beautiful nightgown I ever saw," he said wistfully), and traced the telephone number on the card. It was an address on Turk Street, an unsavory neighborhood. He got dressed and went down there. The place was a flyspecked little cigar store.

From a restaurant across the street he telephoned Daisy, the head switchboard girl at the *Examiner*. Daisy was bright and could do anything. He gave her the number of the cigar store.

"Call them up and say: 'This is Beatrice. I'm out of snow,'" he directed.

Ten minutes later he called her again.

"They told me to go to the Hotel Shady and ask for Verna," she reported.

He went to the office and talked the story over with the managing editor and the city editor. That afternoon the *Examiner* was on the street with an exclusive story and a new campaign against the dope trade. The story withheld the details about the cigar store and Verna, but on the advice of his editors Dad gave them the next morning to the police.

With two detectives he went to the Hotel Shady and

they picked up Verna. She was loaded with the stuff. She said she got it from the cigar store.

They went to the cigar store where they rounded up the proprietor and five sullen loungers. They were apathetic and didn't make much fuss about telling the detectives that they kept their supplies in an apartment on Eddy Street. The detectives took Dad aside.

"These snowbirds think you're a cop, too," they said, "and they might as well go on thinkin' that. We've got to get up to Eddy Street before they get tipped off. You stay here and guard these copies until the boys from headquarters show up with the van."

Dad didn't like that much, but he stayed. He didn't have a gun, so he kept his hand in his coat pocket and tried to look tough. The six guys sat sullenly, staring at him. Time passed and the police did not come. Nobody said a word and more time passed. It was getting close to edition time and Dad was worried. If they knew he was just a newspaperman they'd make a break. He watched the broken minute hand on the old alarm clock above the cash register, and realized he'd have to improvise.

Holding a menacing eye on the copies, he backed to the wall telephone and called his office. Daisy answered.

"Gimme the desk sergeant," he ordered gruffly.

"Sure, Lem," she said and plugged him into the city desk.

"This is Detective Parton. Want to report a preliminary roundup of six snowbirds in a cigar store at 0000 Turk Street."

"O.K.," said the city editor, laughing, as he switched him to a rewrite man.

"Put these names on the blotter, Tim," Dad directed, and he gave the story, keeping one eye on the prisoners. None of them moved and he remembered suddenly that Jack Black,

an ex-burglar friend of the family, had said that all dope addicts are cowards. He felt better.

The van finally arrived and took the boys in, and down at headquarters Dad met the two detectives with three oily characters they had picked up in the Eddy Street apartment. The men admitted that they were a supply depot after the detectives had found a load of illicit drugs behind a secret panel in the bedroom. They declared they got it from Dopey Benny, a New York gangster who had moved West after a clean-up in New York.

With an Irish detective Dad went up to Napa Valley where Dopey Benny ran a farm. The farm specialized in boiling out the girls from Benny's houses of prostitution after they had lost their earning power from too prolonged use of the drugs Benny supplied them with. On a starlit night Dad lay in the grass beside the cop on a hill above the farm. They watched a bus, loaded with girls, roar in at one in the morning, and after that the cop called the local police, and together they raided the joint.

Dad had been on the story a month now, and for the first time he felt they were really getting at the head of the octopus. To be sure, Dopey Benny wasn't the head but he led to someone else, and someone led to someone even higher up. Dad had the inside track on stories, the paper was backing him up 100 per cent, roaring with editorials against the widespread evils of the dope trade, and everything was fine.

One morning he went into his office and the city editor called him over.

"There's a luncheon of the Rotary Club in Oakland today," he said without looking up. "Want you to cover it."

"But we're right in the middle of the dope yarn. Looks

as if there might be something hot on protection coming from state officials."

"We're dropping it," said the city editor firmly. And that was that.

Dad went over to his mailbox and found a note from the managing editor. It thanked him for his dope stories and enclosed a five-dollar gold piece.

The story ran into the sands. The little guys were rounded up, prosecuted, sentenced. They were willing to talk but nothing came of the squealing. Someone with powerful influence stopped the campaign in the papers, and someone powerful stopped the police investigation.

No beautiful redheads appeared in my path but I enjoyed the week anyway. When I went back to the office I was full of enthusiasm for the *Examiner* system of training new reporters, and it was a disappointment to be told they were shorthanded and I wouldn't be going out on the police beat for several weeks.

Up on Telegraph Hill life seemed to be shattering its old form. Mooning for a blue-eyed lieutenant who had gone overseas, Lucile joined the Waves and went off East to train. The shack didn't seem half as amusing without her. Sergeant Joe, normally a gay companion, and my greatest consolation since Pete, plunged into a mood of prolonged gloom from which only drink could extract him. And with sixteen bourbons under his Sam Browne belt he wasn't amusing at all. The chuckle-chinned statistician was constantly in evidence at Val's, so I wasn't. Everywhere I went people talked personalities, the ballet, parties. I wanted to talk about the newspaper business.

I found myself getting to the office early, staying later and later. It wasn't just the atmosphere—it was the people.

Not just the old-timers who had worked with Dad in the old days—but all of them. The rosy old reporters with whisky noses, the three other girl reporters, the thin young men who read Steffens' *Autobiography* in their spare time. When we weren't working we sat on desk tops and talked. The old reporters told of the screwy assignments they had covered, the girls talked economics and the war, the thin young men dreamed of the newspaper they would run some day. All of them recounted bizarre Hearst legends, all of them went to endless trouble to help me out on stories, to teach me the newspaper business. They were the first San Franciscans I had met who seemed to know what was going on "out there" in the big world. And for the first time I found other people who read *The New Yorker*.

Under Eddie McQuade's gentle guidance I felt a growing competence. As the weeks went by, my writing seemed to speed up and smooth out. Within myself a kind of quiet assurance was growing and this unaccustomed assurance gave me a feeling of deep contentment.

One sunny morning, eagerly swinging down Kearny Street on my way to work, I thought about this contentment. It was not the peacefulness of the inertia I felt when I had first come to San Francisco, when I was happy just to lie in the sun and do nothing. No, the quality of this content came from the fact that I had found at last the work I liked to do. And I realized too that I had found the group I had sought, even after I had almost forgotten the search. Not in San Francisco's "barflies and lotus-eaters," not in any latter-day Pre-Raphaelites seeking to revive, as I had, the years that will never return, not in any extreme left-wing crowd with their admirable singleness of purpose and their depressing harsh lines of demarcation.

This then was the source of peace, the end of the search—my work and the friends who worked with me.



THE small boy does not know when he gives his top its last spin; the little girl feels no sense of finality when she plays with her doll house for the last time.

It is a rainy Sunday in May when the little girl unlatches the front of the house for the last time. She is ten years, eight months, four days, and two hours old, and she marks the occasion with no ceremony, no tears. The boy and girl dolls peer out the window at the celluloid flowers Mother glued into the green window boxes . . . the little lamp is on the table . . . the gold door Father cut out on a Christmas Eve so many years ago and hinged to the doll house as the final, perfect touch, swings gently against a postage-stamp picture.

The absorbed little girl has an idea for a new arrangement of the furniture, and she begins to switch the miniature beds and tables. But someone calls that dinner is ready, and she shuts the doll house door for the last time. Tomorrow school will end, and after that the family will go to the country . . . behind the closed gold door the boy and girl dolls will await her return. But she will never return. Eleven is so much older than ten.

Pete's brother, Charles, came to see me on my last night in San Francisco. Neither of us knew that it was my last night, that the next day I would be gone, leaving Telegraph Hill with a conscious sense of severing that the happy little girl never experienced.

I made some mulled wine, and we sat by the fire talking quietly of the past, filled with an unaccountable nostalgia. We talked of picnics and parties, of Carol in Carmel, of Pete in China, of Sergeant Joe in Texas, of all the people who had filled our lives whom the war had taken so far away.

"It's funny," I said, "I feel as if my life in San Francisco had revolved, like the turn of a wheel, and had circled back to where I started."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, when I came I didn't know anybody, and I spent long evenings alone in the shack, thinking of what I was going to do here. And then I met you and Pete and a lot of other people, and my life was full of them. Now they all seem to have gone away or to be busy in shipyards or somewhere, and I'm back in the shack, seeing only you and one or two others . . ."

"But you have your new job."

"Yes . . . but that's a new beginning, don't you see? The job is a new world for me to explore, and the people are new, too. And somehow I feel that that world would exist anywhere—not just in San Francisco—while the world of Telegraph Hill could only exist here on the Hill. So that's two things that make me feel 'this is where I came in.' The feeling of just stepping into a new world, and the fact that the old one has disintegrated—just like my world in New York did."

Charles wandered out into the garden and came back with an old orange box. Moodily he cracked it apart, breaking the slats into pieces small enough to fit the tiny fireplace. Slowly we fed the flames, stopping now and then to warm the pot of mulled wine.

"Oh, lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost come back again . . ." Charles quoted sadly.

He left at midnight, and before I went to bed I observed my nightly ceremony of standing for a few minutes at the bay window, looking at the twinkling hills of Berkeley, and the dark waters between.

The telegram from Mother, telling me to come home immediately, that Dad was dying, arrived at noon at the *Examiner* office the next day.

Within an hour Aunt Sara had provided money for the plane trip; Wilson O'Brien, the day city editor, had jammed through a reservation for eight o'clock that night, and I was in my shack, packing. The next six hours passed like a tense nightmare. The house filled with relatives and friends, loving, helpful, anxious. I gave messages, telephoned, wrote lists of instructions, assured everyone, "I'll be back. He'll get well. Of course, he will."

Leanore and Aunt Sara drove me down to the airport. I don't remember much about that but I remember the clarity of mind, of emotion, which I felt as the plane left the ground and soared up into the night.

I wanted to come back to San Francisco where for the first time I had been free to try and to discard the life of the butterfly, the antics of the china doll. But with a mysterious foreshadowing of the future, I knew that I would not come back.

And I knew too that the moment that wrote *finis* to my life in San Francisco did not come when the plane's wheels lifted from the earth of California. My new world that I had found in the work I liked to do I was taking with me, and it would always be with me, even in the black days that lay ahead—the days when I finally grew up.

No, the end of that other world in San Francisco had

come earlier. As we crossed the bay I looked back to the glowing outline of San Francisco and saw the light on the top of Telegraph Hill. And I knew then that when I had walked out of my gingerbread shack for the last time, the door of the doll's house had closed forever.

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